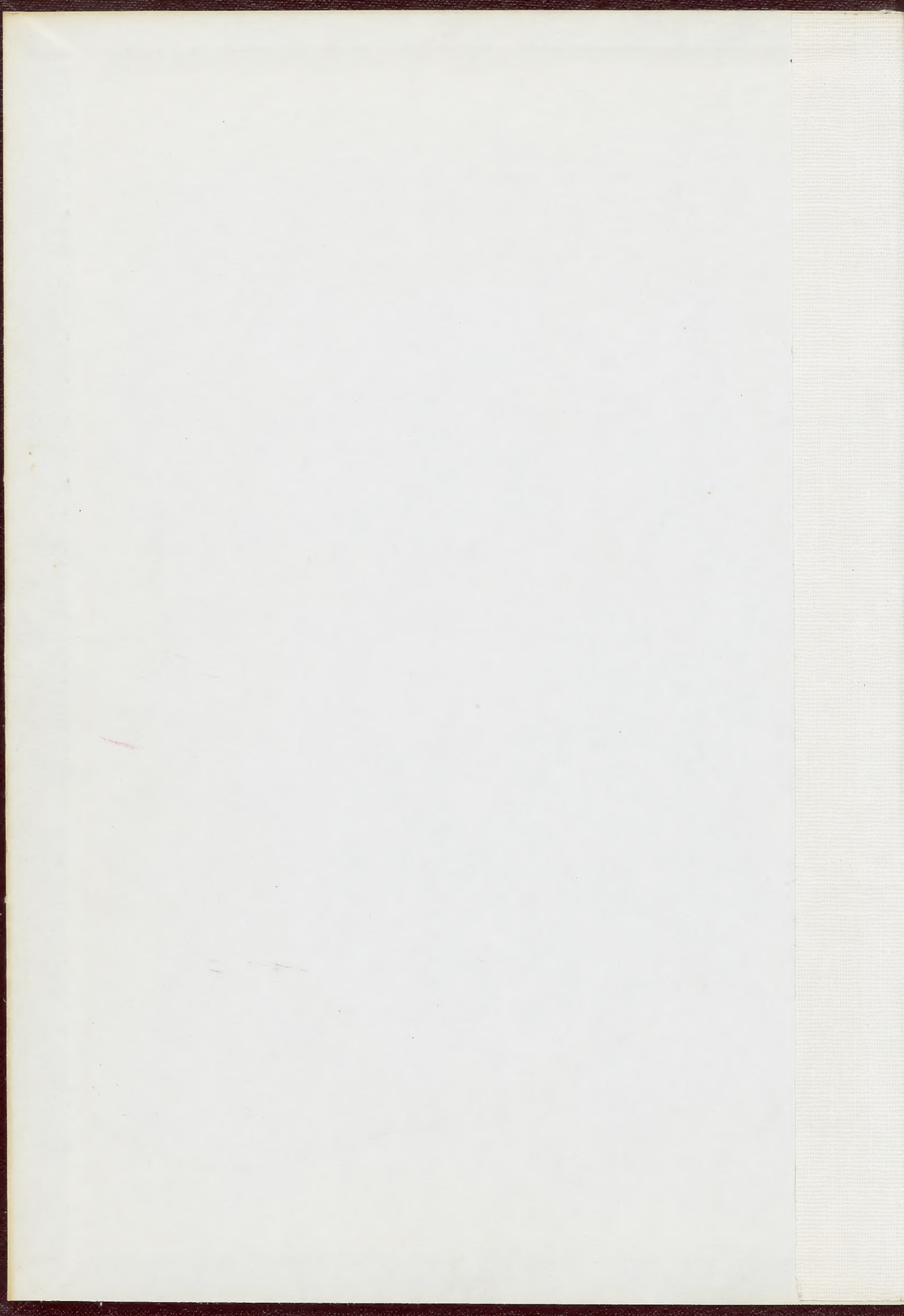
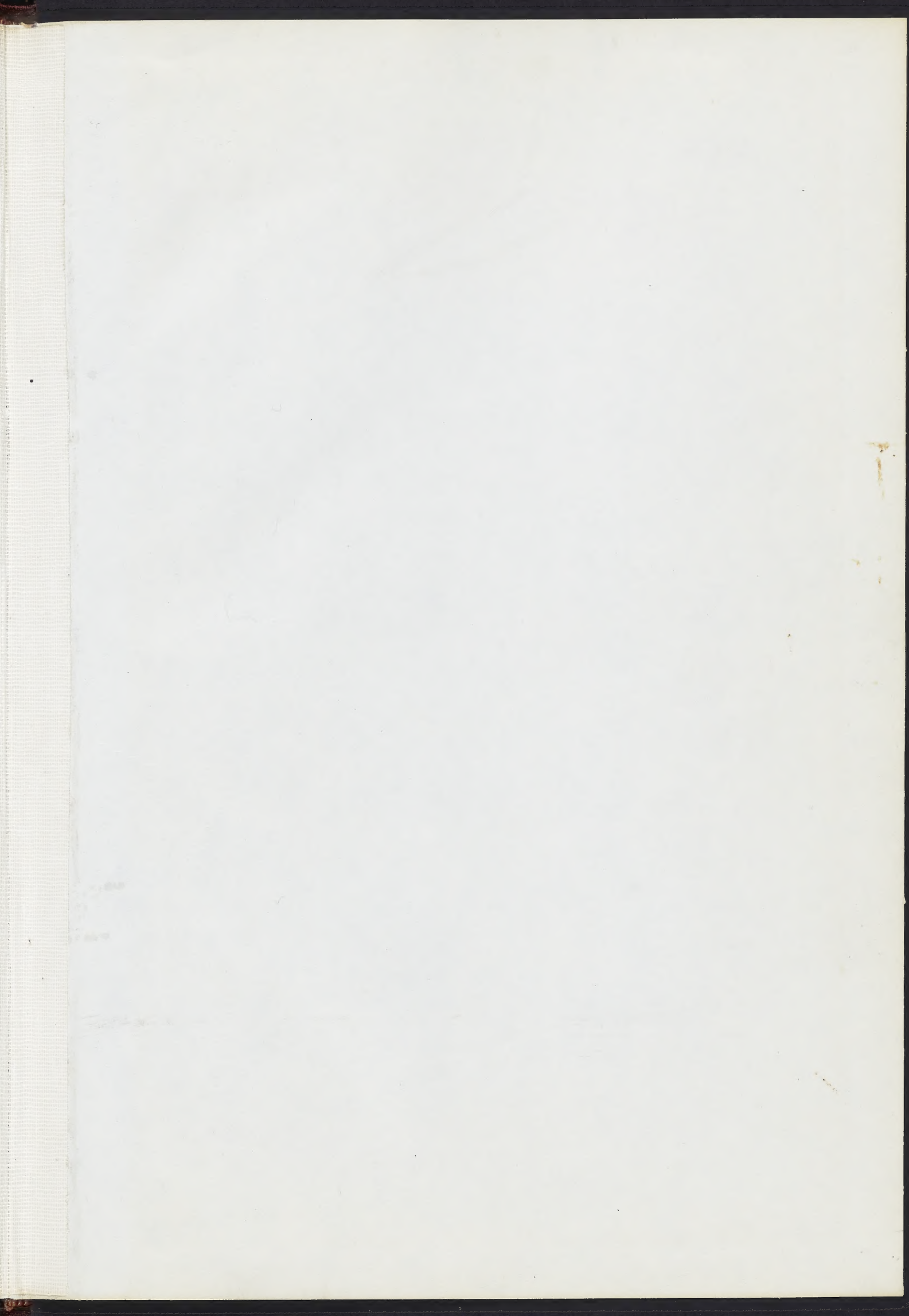


RACE TODAY

1979

DARCUS HOWE





Race Today

VOICE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN BRITAIN

JANUARY 1979 25P

ONE OF MANY WINTERS

BY MARLENE McLEARY

GULLAY MEY JESUS

BY FARRUKH DHONDY

SHORT
STORIES



'Disadvantage in Education'

Dear Race Today

As the new Editor at the Centre for Information and Advice on Educational Disadvantage (CED) I would like to remind your readers of a service we offer free of charge.

Our bi-monthly national journal 'Disadvantage in Education' has a "Lookout" section, in which we give details of future conferences and courses which relate directly or indirectly to the work of CED. We would like to receive advance notification of all such conferences and courses, and we are concerned that, at the moment, few organisations are aware of this service. They can usually use the extra publicity and we are eager to inform our readers.

Yours faithfully,
Penny Bould,
Editor/Information Officer (Press)
Centre for Information & Advice on
Educational Disadvantage,
11, Anson Road, Manchester M14 5BY.

On Teaching Young Blacks

Dear Race Today,

'Teaching Young Blacks' is an important document and one which should be read by all teachers who claim to be committed to the anti-racist fight in schools. Its strength is not only its personal approach, which makes it accessible to the ordinary classroom teacher, who will doubtless recognise in Farrukh's descriptions his or her own experiences with black youth, but the clear political perspective, which cuts through all the confusion surrounding race and school because it is truthful and based on the realities of the classroom.

The article shows very clearly why race is such an issue amongst teachers at the moment, and points to why teachers are faced with 'a crisis of identity'. They see black pupils in the bottom streams of their comprehensive schools; they are at the receiving end of their indiscipline; they know that of the pupils suspended or expelled from their schools a great many are black; they want to show, that they oppose groups like the National Front and all racist philosophies. We all share Farrukh's feeling that the odd anti-National Front demonstration outside a school is not 'taking into account (our) experience of schooling'. But up to now that has been all that the left has offered. That and multi-culture. It is not surprising that so many teachers have embraced the idea of multi-cultural curriculum as one step towards combatting racism, since every agency has been telling them that it will include the inspectorate. It takes some guts for teachers who still 'cling to some ideal of education' to admit that they hope some West Indian stories, or a bit of work on dialect will at least get the black pupils to sit down, shut up and listen for once.

Teachers shouldn't be surprised when their bit of multi-culture doesn't work,

for, as Farrukh says, 'black pupils' very music, professed philosophies and lifestyles, contain in them an antagonism to school and society as it is.' And teachers know this. Time and again I have heard in the staffroom: 'They're fine when I let them discuss the police (etc.), but when I try to get them to write about it for their folders, they don't want to know...' At conferences, teachers listen solemnly about how black pupils are failing at school, and consider carefully suggestions about the curriculum, language 'problems' etc., and yet fail to see how this does not match up to their daily experience, expressed as, 'She's bright, but she doesn't care'... or 'She could do really well, but she hasn't the self-discipline to get a CSE grade 1, or GCE 'O' level'.

'Teaching Young Blacks' starts to put all this into perspective and points the way to the resolving of the contradictions. It says ALTARF: 'had not connected its own material interests with the forces which have been battling the colonial institution in which teachers work'. This is the crunch, and it is significant that the traditional left seem to lead teachers away from such a

realisation rather than towards it. A polarisation will have to take place. The independent movement of teachers will be formed by those teachers who agree with Farrukh when he says: 'As a teacher I don't want to contain indiscipline, I want to do away with the system that causes it'. The others will presumably fight us because they do not in fact want to change schools or society. That independent movement of teachers will have to knock on the head those analyses aimed at making us feel guilty — that we are agents of the state, that it is our fault because black pupils feel 'alienated' etc. We have to say categorically that it is in our interests, as workers, to change society, that you can't do that without challenging the state, and that in schools at least black pupils are at the forefront of a movement to do that, because they reject all that schools exist for. This is not an easy perspective for teachers to put into practice in their schools, but all others lead to the containment of pupils and their dissatisfactions, and can only, therefore, be finally, reactionary.

Yours faithfully,
Margaret Peacock,

"My warmest appreciation on the high excellence of your magazine."

— C. L. R. James

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A Journal of the Revolutionary Left

Current issue (#5) contains:

Punk Rock: Music in Search of a Movement
Debate: Marxism and American Slavery
Women and Modern Capitalism
Books on Armed Struggle
Correspondence

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REVIEWING

We publish, in this issue of 'Race Today', two short stories, poems, reviews of books, plays, music, television that the black community offers itself and the British public.

"Masada", the play by Edgar White, a writer from the Caribbean island of Montserrat, who moved to the United States with his parents when he was five, has carved for itself a small place in contemporary British drama. First produced at the Keskidee Centre in south London, a black arts project financed by the state, it moved to the Royal Court Theatre, a centre and launching-pad for British playwrights who are serious, but not necessarily commercial. The Royal Court gets you the best reviews, the best contacts, but not the best contracts.

Of all the reggae groups that boom through the blues of Britain, we choose to review the music of Jamaican based, "Third World" because they are the group today which threatens to join Bob Marley as a representational sound from the Caribbean.

"Empire Road" is the fourth serial which features British blacks. British television channels and radio programmes have given a certain amount of statutory time to Asian and West Indian programmes. "Empire Road" is different. In the review which follows, Akua Rugg assesses its strengths and significance.

One of the short stories that we publish in this section was the winner of a competition for young black writers run by the Keskidee Centre. The other was written for 'Race Today' by a member of the collective.

Our cultural section, this month, offers our writers, illustrators and reviewers a platform. Our journal, which we have sought to establish as the voice of the black community in Britain, dedicates itself, at least, to the interpretation, appreciation and criticism of the vital artefacts that the black community surfaces. Our singers don't sing in a vacuum. Our writers express a truth which only they can express. More than that, as a political organisation we must

work towards offering them a platform on which no compromise is necessary. That would mean that black creation can draw its strength from, and lend its richness to the organised force which steers the international labourers of this country from problems to power.

At this moment it means nurturing those whom our organisation has won and writing constructively about those whom it has not. At a further moment, it will mean developing the organisational and distributional networks which make possible the absorption of the energies of black artists. Such an ambition means more than floating Tamla Motown with Smokey Robinson as one of its directors. It means making the working class organisation for the working class artist. Britain has tried before and failed. The working class artist has fallen prey to capitalist lures. The black artistic movement has made a few compromises, but has to retain its soul to retain its identity. We in 'Race Today' feel that our critical contribution is an important index of that identity.

An artistic movement must be nourished by a critical one. The critical endeavour is in itself a creative activity. In the white world, these are clichés which beg definitions. What do you mean by artistic? What do you mean by critical? In the black British movement, establishing roots in this country, a reviewer can still look at a play, read a book and say, for instance "Empire Road" is a trail-blazer, in that it is a TV production that presents blacks as protagonists rather than mere foils. . . . " or, "It is the first book of its kind published in Britain."

"Both remarks are taken from reviews that fill the following pages. Both spring from the established political position that 'Race Today' embodies, from the embryonic, critical tradition which sees black creativity in specific conditions as part of the total social and political advance.

Race Today Collective, January 1979.

THE ANTIGUAN CONNECTION

During the last fourteen months, a political movement has emerged in the small island of Antigua. Antiguanians have been campaigning against the use of their island state as a staging post for the illegal shipment of arms to the racist regime in South Africa.

The American/Canadian multi-national, Space Research Corporation, under the guise of operating an arms testing station in Antigua, has been shipping 155mm Howitzer projectiles from New Brunswick in Canada, via Antigua, and to the final destination in South Africa.

These are the facts. On March 14, 1977, the MV Moura, owned by Alpine Shipping Corporation, Canada, docked at Antigua from New Brunswick, Canada, with 20 containers of Space Research 155mm Howitzer shells consigned to Space Research in Antigua. Some of these sophisticated weapons were transported to Space Research base at Crabbes peninsula in Antigua. The remainder of the weapons stayed on the dock of Antigua, guarded by the Antiguan Defence Force, on the orders of the Antigua government.

On May 15, 1977, the MV Lindinger Coral, chartered by Space Research Corporation, arrived in Antigua from New Brunswick, Canada, with 16 containers of Space Research 155mm Howitzer shells. The cargo of weapons remained on the docks of Antigua, again guarded by the Antigua Defence Force.

On May 27, the SA Tugelaland, chartered by Space Research Corporation, arrived in Antigua and loaded the 36 containers of Space Research 155mm Howitzer shells brought to Antigua earlier by the MV Moura and Lindinger Coral. The Tugelaland, owned by the South Africa Marine Company, also loaded two radar vans, a Dodge passenger van and 26 large crates of sophisticated electrical equipment manufactured by Space Research at its headquarters on the American/Canadian boarder. The loading was done with armed Antigua Defence Force guards providing security.

The SA Tugelaland made a false declaration in Antigua and said its next port of call would be Canada. It set sail out of Antigua on May 28.

According to the Lloyds register, the SA Tugelaland, after leaving Antigua, with its Space Research cargo, called at the following ports in South Africa: Port Elizabeth on June 15; East London on June 17; Durban on June 18; Cape Town on July 1; and then finally at Walvis Bay, Namibia.

On August 27, the SA Tugelaland arrived in Antigua on its second voyage with 32 containers of Space Research 155mm Howitzer shells on board, declared as rough steel forgings. The Tugelaland took on board three containers of "testing materials". One of these fell while being loaded and waterfront workers present saw the contents — Space Research 155mm shells and other sophisticated military equipment.

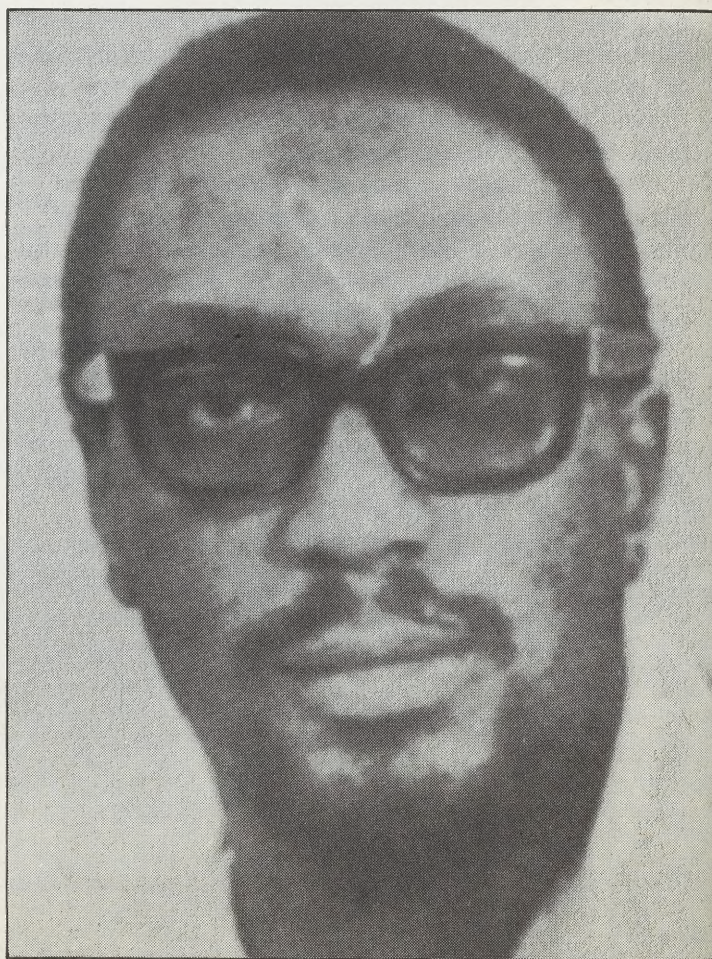
The SA Tugelaland arrived at Port Elizabeth, South Africa, on September 14; East London; South Africa on September 16; Durban on September 17; Luderitz September 16; finally at Walvis Bay, Namibia on September 28.

The Antiguan people, led by the Antiguan Liberation Movement, exposed this clandestine arms trail as a flagrant defiance of United Nations sanctions banning arms shipments to South Africa. The complicity of the Antiguan government

was laid bare. Not only did the Antiguan military provide an armed guard for the shipments, but the legal firm, Bird and Bird, provided both legal advice and offices for the Space Research Corporation. Vere Bird is the Prime Minister of Antigua and Lester Bird, his son is deputy Prime Minister.

One need not speculate on the complicity of both the American and British governments. In late 1975, an American state department document (N SS739) was leaked to the press. The document revealed the existence of Dr. Kissinger's Operation Tar Baby which called for the US government to verbally denounce apartheid, while actively lending the South African racist regime every possible support, especially military support. The United States, therefore, had to find a client government, sufficiently obscure in world affairs, which would enable the US/Canada multi-national to ship arms from its shores to South Africa and Rhodesia. That client government is Antigua.

Nor could the Antiguan government be so hired without the say-so of the British. Antigua is an associated state of Britain. The local government is responsible for the internal



Tim Hector, Chairman of the Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement

affairs of the colony and Britain is responsible both for Defence and Foreign Affairs.

These imperialist giants could guarantee 'the good behaviour' of the Antigua government but, as is usually the case, the black masses of Antigua could not be so delivered.

In the last 10 years, the peoples of the Caribbean have, in a series of strikes, rebellions and armed struggles returned to the anti-imperialist tradition which is firmly rooted in Caribbean history. Called upon by the Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement to stand solid with their South African brothers and sisters, they responded enthusiastically. Water-front workers refused to handle Space Research cargo, sections of the population picketed, demonstrated and turned up in their thousands at public meetings. The journal of the ACLM, 'Outlet', informed the population at every stage in the development of Space Research's counter-movements. It was a relentless piece of investigative and campaigning journalism.

The Antigua government hit back. They pressured local printers to refuse handling 'Outlet'. Pickets were arrested and permission for public meetings refused. Space Research, in turn, sought to bribe the local population. They sponsored steelbands, sportsclubs and other cultural activities. Large numbers refused their blood-stained offerings.

The anti-imperialist campaign now assumed international proportions. Television and radio, in North America, brought the issue to the American and Canadian population. On November 5, the Panorama crew revealed to millions of British viewers this clandestine arms trail which led from the shores of North America via Antigua and finally to South Africa.

Something had to give in this tension packed political atmosphere in which the people of Antigua were locked in struggle with a massive multi-national backed by two powerful imperialist nations.

On Tuesday November 7, at two minutes after 1 o'clock (Antigua time), Space Research officials in the USA phoned Antigua and ordered the assassination of the chairman of the Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement, Tim Hector.

Hector, a principal at the local secondary school, was to be shot by a high powered rifle when he arrived at Hill Secondary School that morning. From around five minutes to eight until 8.38 that morning, the murder squad car with number plate H 5523, the would be assassins on board, appeared outside the school.

At 11 pm, on Tuesday 7, the car was waiting on the road outside Hector's house with the Space Research hit man in it. Hector is alive today only because of the vigilance of the Antiguan people.

The would-be assassin has been identified. He is Warren Hart, a black American. On October 31, a week before Hector's date with death, Hart, who entered Antigua as an accountant employed by Space Research, went to the customs at the local airport to clear some football jerseys consigned to Space Research. In these football jerseys, there was concealed a high powered target rifle with a telescopic lens. A customs officer seized the rifle since there was no licence for its importation, because the rifle was not declared, and because there was a violation of the law in bringing arms to Antigua under false pretences.

Warren Hart, however, was not arrested for these offences. Reportedly, on orders "from higher-up", he was allowed to leave the airport a free man. Later, Warren Hart sought to have a West Indian born hotelier claim the rifle as his own. The hotelier refused to do so, at a dinner party at his hotel.

Since all else had failed, Warren Hart decided to use the power of Space Research. He went to the Commissioner of

Police who is reported to have issued a licence for the seized rifle, pronto.

Warren Hart rented a house in Crosbies, Antigua, where he concealed the rifle, four hand-grenades and a phial of poison. Once the plot had failed, Hart returned to the USA. From there he telephoned to Antigua on November 10 and gave instructions that the grenades, the rifle and the poison be removed from his house. The weapons were removed by a Defence Force officer, Sergeant-Major Maurice James. A little more about Warren Hart. He is certainly no accountant. Let the 'Toronto Globe and Mail', Canada's largest daily provide the characterisation. "An informant working for the RCMP security service secretly recorded conversations of Warren Allmand when he was solicitor-general and MP John Rodrigues of the New Democratic Party, documents released yesterday by Conservative Elmer Mackay allege. They say many Mounties disliked their minister because they thought him communist."

The documents include an affidavit by the informant, a US citizen named Warren Hart, letters Mr Hart wrote to Mr Mackay during the last four months and a transcript of an interview with Mr Mackay, MP for Central Nova, had with Mr Hart.

And again: "Mr Hart, who is currently working for US Navy intelligence near Washington, says in the documents that he worked as a paid informant for the RCMP security service from 1971 to 1975. He was introduced to the Mounties in 1971 by two FBI agents meeting at a Washington hotel".

In the outcry which followed in the Canadian press, Hart was exposed as an agent who infiltrated the Caribbean insurrectionary movement between 1971 and 1975. On several occasions he was debriefed by British, Canadian and American intelligence. His record of murder and provocative action extended to the Black American movement where FBI files reveal his complicity in the murder of Black Panther Fred Hampton and several others.

Hart was the British, the Canadian, the American reply to the Antiguan people's demand that Space Research must go, that imperialism be chased from the shores of the Caribbean.

We charge the Foreign Secretary, David Owen, as the British government's representatives, with complicity in Hector's attempted murder, with complicity in using Antigua as a base for the illegal shipment of arms to South Africa.

We await his reply to questions raised by Member of Parliament for the York constituency. Here goes:

Dear David,
Mr. Darcus Howe of 'Race Today' tells me that there is now good evidence that the defence forces in Antigua have been involved in a plot to assassinate the chairman of the Antiguan Caribbean Liberation Movement, Mr. Tim Hector, following the revelations on Panorama about provision of military equipment to South Africa via Antigua.

Could you tell me:—

- (1) Whether the allegations of involvement in the plot are correct?
- (2) If so, what steps are you taking to deal with the matter?
- (3) What steps is the Government taking to deal with the matters raised in the Panorama programme?

Yours sincerely,
Alex Lyon.

Race Today Collective in cooperation with Antigua
Caribbean Liberation Movement

ONE OF MANY WINTERS

BY MARLENE McLEARY. DRAWINGS BY UNA HOWE.

Monica Ronwell had regretted coming to England ever since she first saw the dark rain-clouds in the bleak sky; the rows of cold stone terraced houses with many smoking chimneys which she had thought were factories; the drab, damp interior of the basement flat which she shared with her husband and two children.

The Ronwells had arrived from the West Indies in the autumn of 1961 — October of the previous year—and had stayed with relatives until they found a place of their own; the basement flat which was hardly fit for human habitation, the 'rat-hole', as Mr. Ronwell contemptuously named it.

Monica was sitting alone in the flat one Friday afternoon. The rain pounded incessantly upon the chipped window-sill and the concrete slabs of the pavement outside. The hardly visible fumes from the paraffin heater curled upwards towards the ceiling.

"Dear Sister Liz," Monica wrote on a clean sheet of writing paper. "How keeping? Is it mango time out there in Jamaica now?...It is so cold out here in England...Times are hard. Very hard....Joe is cracking up under this hardship. He wants to go back. He has become so vicious and is always drunk. I am afraid of him because he beats me sometimes and we cannot leave each other because neither of us has anywhere to go....But one day like one I am going to returned to Jamaica....I know it is hard there too, but I can cope with hardship when the sun is shining...Don't forget me, Liz...."

Monica paused to think. She was not sure how to round off the letter. She had been crying as she wrote, depressed, frightened and alone.

She heard a voice upstairs. Someone was calling her. She was too choked to reply. A moment later she heard footsteps on the wooden staircase outside the door and finally there was a knock.

"Monica, are you in there?" It was the Barbadian woman, Mrs. Croy, who lived in the flat above the Ronwells'.

"Yes, Mrs. Croy," Monica managed to speak. "Come in, nuh."

The door opened and a stout, dark woman entered.

"Monica, didn't you take a look round the back yard?"

"No. Why?"

"Because all your clothes have fallen off the line into the mud. You'll have to wash them all over again."

"Curse the stupid clothes, man. Curse the rain, curse everything. I can't stand no

more!" Monica began to weep aloud.

"What's the matter, Monica?" Mrs. Croy approached her and regarded her with sympathy. "Is it your husband? I heard all the noise last night."

"It's everything! I can't stand no more."

Mrs. Croy bent and put an arm about Monica's shoulder.

"Well, what's the use of crying?" she said. "You will only sink further and further down in your depression....And what about your two children? They are young and aren't aware of many things but they are aware of depression."

"It's not only depression they're going to be aware of tonight," Monica sobbed. "There is no food in the house. Nothing. That's why I always tell them never to waste any of the free dinner they get at school...Only God knows how I want to leave this place."

"There is suffering all over the world, child. If you suffer one place then you can expect to suffer at another," the woman said kindly. "Anyway, put a rain coat over your head and go out an' pick up the clothes, and I will bring down a pack of rice and some salt fish that I have upstairs."

"Thank you," said Monica, drying her eyes with her sleeve. She managed to smile at the woman who had also suffered similar hardship on first arriving in the country five years ago. She had no children and her husband had deserted her.

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Croy said before she went out. "Remember that the man with the spongy red nose is coming round to collect the rent tomorrow, Monica. Remind your husband. I wouldn't like to see you and your family thrown out mercilessly into the rain."

Monica nodded wearily

The back yard was wild and grubby with pieces of old junk piled up at the far end against the fence. As Monica bent to pick up the wet clothes and put them into the basin she glanced up at the upstairs window of the house next door and caught sight of a wrinkled, pale old face, peeping out from behind the dull curtains. The old woman's eyes were faded, her gaze hostile. She turned solemnly from the window and the dull curtains fell back into place.

The factory always closed an hour earlier on Fridays. Joe Ronwell worked there as a packer and would hang up his overalls with glee as the clock struck 5.30 and walk proudly out of the factory gates,

fondling the wage-pocket in his pocket.

'William's place' was his usual Friday night haunt where he would squander away his earnings on drink and gambling.

He arrived at William Samuel's gambling den in Lewisham at ten to six. As he went through the gate and up the stone flight of steps to the front door he could hear a Johnny Ace number. He knocked and a few seconds later the door opened. He was met by an outburst of joviality, laughter and greeting from William himself who ushered him into the front room where cigarette smoke hung heavily in the air and the odour of beer and gin was strong. The men sitting around the table in the middle of the room were laughing raucously as they slammed the dominoes down with ferocity. Joe was given a drink, then went to join them for the next game.

"Name the price for the next four games!" said Joe, loudly.

"Forty pounds for the man who comes up on top for each of the four games!" one man suggested.

The rest agreed. And the game began.

"Pass me another drink, Will."

"Boy, you drink too fast, you know," said William, who was standing by the table on which there were many bottles of drink.

"Well, the drink keeps up me concentration. Pass i' fi me!"

The game was long and Joe came out lucky when it finally ended. He wanted to play again but at a higher price—from £40 to £60. This time the game went to another man who suggested yet another game. He suggested £20 for the game. That way he could keep the remaining £40 of his winnings.

A woman entered the front room to take out the dirty glasses. She was William Samuel's wife. She looked weary and bothered. She didn't say a word.

The group around the table had decided to start playing cards now. To them, cards was to be taken much more seriously than dominoes. A lot more money was at stake with cards.

The gaming continued until late into the night. Money continuously changed hands—from winner to winner as each man won and lost. It was one-forty a.m. The hour for the final game had arrived. The winner of this game would be the over-all winner and would be the reigning champion until the following Friday when everyone would come with their unopened wage-packets.

Everyone was concentrating on this



game, for the winning man would leave William's place eighty pounds richer.

Joe's eyes shifted from one face to another as the last card was played. There was silence before the winner finally gave an exultant shout.

"No!" Joe disagreed angrily. He stood up and glared at the winner who sat opposite him. "That wasn't fair. You was cheatin'. I know you Rynie. You always cheat."

"No, Joe. Rynie get the winnings fair and square," reasoned William. "You's a bad loser, Joe."

Joe, in his drunken stupor, began to curse. Angrily, he knocked his glass of beer off the table and it crashed noisily to the floor.

"None of that now, Joe," William said, grasping Joe's arm. Some of the other men got up to hold Joe back. "Look, Joe, I warn you before about this. If you know seh you is a bad loser then no come back ya fi gamble. Me no want you mashin' up all me things just because you lose a game. Come, let we tek him outside."

The crowd of men brought Joe out into the passage, opened the front door and pushed him out onto the threshold. The door closed behind him. Joe lost his footing and stumbled painfully down the stone steps. It was still raining hard and Joe was cold and wet, angry and drunk. He was also penniless. He had to walk home.

The two children were asleep on the single bed in the corner and Monica was alone upon her double bed, gazing up at the darkened ceiling, listening to the pounding rain. Any time she felt a pain of anxiety at Joe's lengthy absence, she would immediately attempt to recall a pleasant memory. She was remembering the time when she and her sisters used to bathe in the gully stream at St. Thomas in the early hours of the morning and how Joe, who lived on the neighbouring land, would come and peep.

The memory finally dissolved and anxiety set in once more. The continuous rain sounded louder than ever but suddenly she heard footsteps outside. Someone was descending from the street down the stone steps to the front door. The key turned in the lock. The hall door opened. Then closed. Finally, the door of the room opened and the light was switched on. Monica decided to pretend she was asleep.

She heard the door close and his footsteps drag wearily across the lino. She heard him pull out a chair and sit down. She heard him begin to weep.

"Oh God," Monica whispered, and rose herself up slightly and saw him sitting at the table with his head in his hands. She got up quietly and approached him cautiously but she soon realised that Joe was too weary to fight or curse.

"Joe," she whispered. "You should not go back to that place. Never go back. Bring your money home every Friday. Don't let your children starve." Monica felt a great ease—a relief in her compassion. Joe said nothing. He kept his face in his hands. "Joe," Monica continued, "We can expect to be evicted tomorrow when the landlord comes and there is no rent."

"You never look in the coat pocket?" he said.

"What coat pocket, Joe?"

"You only have one coat, you know."

"Yes, Joe." Monica left his side and moved towards the door where her coat was hanging on a hook. She felt inside the pocket and something rustled against her hand. She withdrew a piece of paper—a five pound note.

"Joe!" she exclaimed.

"You know how long that's been there?" he said.

"Oh, I didn't know, Joe. I didn't know."

"Since last week."

There was a silence then. "Please, Joe, don't go back to that place. Promise me."

"No one's gonna stop me going to that place. Not even William himself. I have my differences to settle."

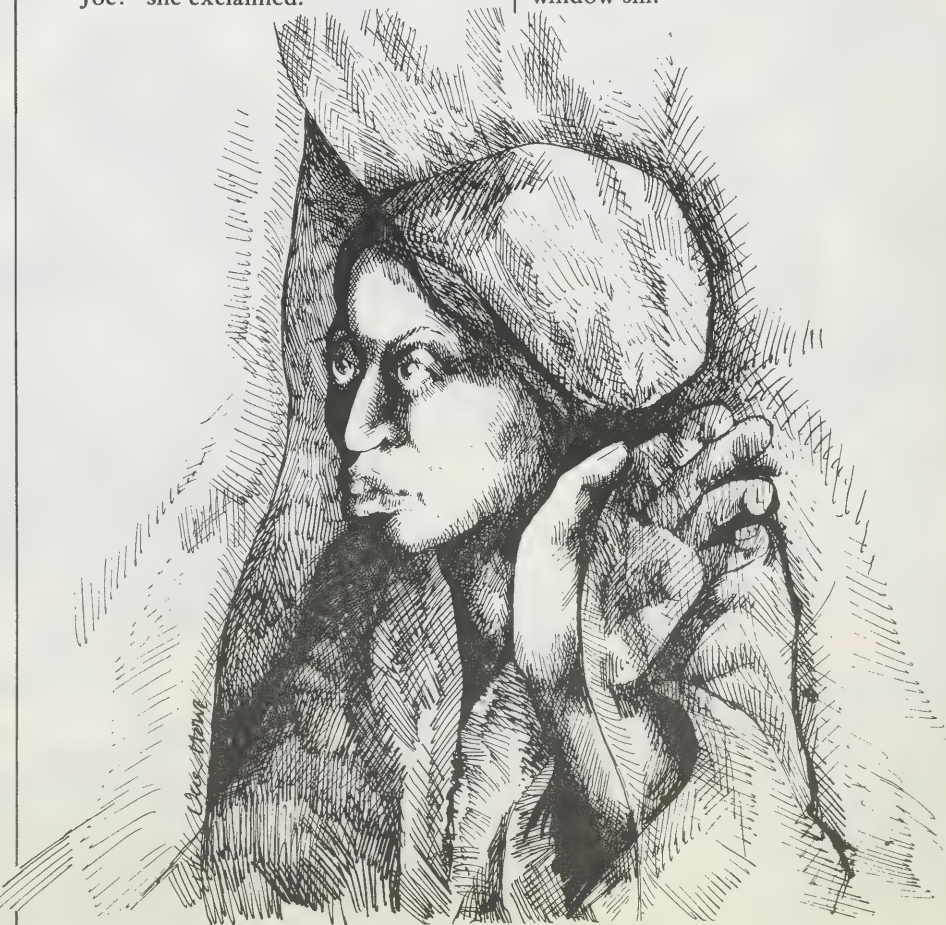
"But gambling differences are not important, Joe. Please."

"Don't worry. You'll get your weekly fiver to gamble with the red-nose man to keep this room. You can leave me alone to gamble for what I want to gamble."

Joe stood up. He changed out of his clothes and went wearily to bed.

"Turn off the light," he ordered. Monica did as she was told. She did not return to bed, however. She went towards the window and gazed out between the curtains at the eternal rain. The nightly chill make her shiver and the thought of tomorrow made her feel ill.

This winter of 1962 was her second winter in England and fearfully she foresaw more days of despair. She saw them in the crystal-ball-like raindrops on the window sill.



GULLAY MEY JESUS

BY FARRUKH DHONDY. DRAWINGS BY UNA HOWE.

Our host was called V.J. I had known him slightly in London. He was a businessman, the director of a cotton mill in North Bombay. He introduced me to his wife and to his other guests.

"You know Polly Mehta, of course," he said.

I replied that I'd heard that she worked for All India Radio television, but hadn't actually seen her programme. I was only on a brief visit, couldn't afford to watch television, too jammed up with seeing members of the clan on whom I had to pay courtesy visits.

Polly was a sombre lady, no longer young, with long black hair falling neatly round her face, sitting with her knees wide apart as though she wasn't used to a saree. She held her glass of whiskey in both hands and raised it hesitatingly to her lips, like a child with an awkward mug.

The other girl was called Andrea. She was English. It emerged in the conversation that she was on her way back to London after having quit an ashram in Poona. She'd been, for the last year, a disciple of a swami, a voluntary conscript in a regiment of whites. Now she'd deserted.

"I'm sorry, Farrukh, but it's not going to be much of a Christmas dinner," V. J. said to me as he opened the door. For the third time that evening he explained:

"Our cook's gone on the blink. I've got some stuff from Gaylords, but I'm afraid tandoori won't measure up if you were expecting turkey.

"What sort of blink?"

"Can't stop these servants nowadays. We gave the bugger two days off for Christmas before Christmas, a week ago. He said he was quite happy with that. This afternoon he comes to Nita and says he has to go out this evening because he's been invited to witness a miracle. My god, if I'd have been at home, I'd have kicked him up his arse and told him to get on with a miracle dinner. We were expecting a lot of people."

"I told him, I said, 'why are you doing this to me?' Anyway, we don't want to bore you with our domestic troubles," said Mrs V.J.

"Bloody Christians. He was so damned cheeky, he says to Nita 'what are you having a Christmas party for, you're both Hindus'. Can you imagine?"

"What's this miracle?" I asked.

V. J. shrugged.

"It's a woman up in Bandra, in some-

one's derelict garage. They say she's got 'gullay mey Jesus', Jesus in the neck.

Apparently, she speaks from her neck, which is all swollen up and cures the sick and performs miracles. A sort of full-throated pregnancy."

"The woman must have cancer," his wife said.

"How exciting. Where's this place?" asked Polly Mehta, sounding more like the news-hound than the excited adolescent she tried to portray.

Andrea wanted to go. She had lived a year in India already, and with 15 hours of her trip left, she would like to end it with a miracle. In the car, she told us that she'd come to India looking for the miracle in her own life. No, it hadn't been wasted. Yes, she'd spent all the money she had, and had given up her career in London as an accountant. The ashram had been alright, but she constantly, three times in her life at least, had the sensation of waking up from a dream, unsure of her ability to cope with even the most trivial realities outside the dream, but sure that she had to.

"Like a hangover and a clear head at the same time," she said.

We all confessed that we didn't know the sensation, and she was silent.

In quest of the miracle we got into the Hindustan Ambassador and drove from Colaba, along the pearl necklace of Bombay, a drive between the sea and five-storied apartment houses, to the western sea-front, where the smells changed from living on the sea to commerce with it. On the beaches, to the left as we drove, there were crowds of people and the handcarts of peanuts and bhel-puri vendors. Beyond their gas lamps were the shadowy mats of the masseurs, stretched within yards of the white-foamed waves.

"Are they all out for Christmas?" Andrea asked.

"None of them know the meaning of the word," V.J. said. "Even the Christians just use it as an excuse to get away from work".

"It doesn't mean much more than that in London, does it?" asked Polly Mehta.

"Not to me," I said. "I have trouble every Christmas. Forget to get my shopping done and go to the bank and that sort of thing."

"No January sales?" V.J.'s wife asked.

"That's after Christmas, when the nation has got over its drunken stupor," V.J. said, "But when I was there we used to have a good time."

"I thought you said you were very poor



in England with your lousy Tata scholarship and all that," his wife said.

"That was at first. But even when we were at University we had a good time. Except for the first Christmas. Boy, that was grim. I say, Farrukh, do you know Pesi? Pesi Kotwal. A *bawa* like yourself. He used to get a job in the Post Office every year. He had a racket worked out with one of the chaps who worked there full-time. English bloke. Every year he'd get the same job, delivering parcels on a post office van with this fellow, and they'd feel up the parcels and, you'll like this, if they found some bottles going from capitalist firm to greasy directors, they would put them in a special bag. All us *deshis* used to get together in London at Christmas when the whites went home. They would call us, of course, a sort of half-hearted invitation because their families felt sorry for foreign students or something. But we used to live together with sleeping bags and chickens and turkeys and Pesi would be in charge of the drink."

"My god, you didn't steal, did you?" Polly said.

"It's known as robbing the Queen's Mails," V.J. replied.

"Suppose it was going from a nephew to an old lady somewhere in Hampstead?" his wife added.

"Old ladies don't live in Hampstead. They are all perpetually young there," V.J. observed.

"What about your first lousy Christmas?" I asked.

"I'll tell you about it if you tell me your worst Christmas story," V.J. said.

It was to be a twenty mile drive. Ten up and ten down from the suburb where the miracle was to take place.

"Just like Chaucer," Andrea commented.

"What's this miracle supposed to be?" I asked.

"It's a long rigmarole," V.J.'s wife replied."

"Jesus is going to come out of this woman's throat tonight and appear before the crowds. These people are so gullible. This Joseph, our cook, he starched his white shirt and polished his shoes with spit and greased his filthy hair, looking like he was going to his mother's wedding."

"Your story now," Andrea said, and V.J. began.

"My first year at Cambridge was horrible. Even Gandhi, not this one, the Mahatma, would have been proud of my chastity and poverty, and I hadn't even

taken any vows. In the first term I met a lot of Indians. We had the India Society and we all got to know each other, more or less. We used to hang about together. In term they played polo and at Christmas they went solo. You know how sneaky Indians are. I didn't know a thing about Christmas jobs and all this. Some guys found out about them and applied to the Post Office and all sorts of places. Ten days before we went down for Christmas, I discovered that most of my so-called friends had something lined up for the holidays, some way to make some money, or relatives in London in the High Commission, or in business or something.

So I stayed that winter in Cambridge with one sweater and two pounds a week to live on from my scholarship. I didn't even know that we couldn't stay in college. The porters came to me every day and said I had to get out because a conference of businessmen was going to take over the rooms in January. They had to be re-painted before Christmas.

I was in a place called 'V' block, and it was one of the only centrally heated staircases in the college. On my first day up, the Dean called me to his rooms. He gave me a glass of sherry and played some piano sonata and then said that he hoped we'd be happy in 'V' block because it was a tradition to put all our tropical friends next to the radiators. He was a strange guy. He used to cycle to Jerusalem every summer and walk about in shorts the rest of the time.

Anyway, I moved into digs in Fitzwilliam Street, opposite the museum. It was a room at the top of the house with a gas meter which was a shilling addict. You know, you go on at us bourgeoisie about poverty and all that rubbish, but that winter I lived on scrambled eggs and potatoes and spent more money on the gas to boil them than on the potatoes. The Third World had come to Cambridge. I swear I cried when I found that the loaf of bread I'd bought and expected to last me four days went mouldy in a day."

"You're breaking my heart," Polly

mocked.

"No, listen, this is the story of a self-made man."

"That's because you couldn't make anyone else you told me," said his wife.

"Alright," V.J. continued, "It was real poverty. It was only tough till the hall opened again in January term and the meals were served and the central heating was switched on, but, boy I went

through it. There was nobody I knew left in Cambridge. The streets were deserted. I used to stick in my room with two shirts and a sweater, and go out once in two days when I dared to climb out of the blankets."

"On Christmas Day itself I went out. I walked down King's Parade and thought that I'd write to my mother and tell her about the snow and make it sound good. I walked into the colleges, and normally they are beehives, full of cups of coffee and some conversation, but they were all dark, with a couple of overtime porters on duty and nobody else. I was drawing a sort of map of expatriate Cambridge in my head, imagining the conversations I could have if Tariq or Darryl hadn't pushed off to London and the bloody Post Office."

"I tried a couple of guys in Trinity and Pembroke and they weren't there, so I started on my way back to my digs. I wasn't a drinker then, I didn't know more than a half pint of bitter, so I just walked back. The only place that seemed to have any warmth coming out of it was a church. What's it called? Great St. Mary's or something. It had its lights seductively on. I went into the lit archway. There was a fellow from the God squad with a big artificial smile trading on loneliness and he directed me in, as I brushed the snow from off my duffle coat. There were about a hundred people in the congregation. I had never been to a church before, I tell you, but I knew it would be alright if I did what the rest of them did. I went to a pew at the back. They were singing some songs, a hymn I suppose, about bows and arrows. Then they all sat down and I sat down too."

"Then the preacher called for another hymn and everyone stood up again. The guy next to me began to nudge me. He gave me his hymn-book to share and I sang, trying to follow the song. We were singing, I remember, about 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,' a lovely tune, but you couldn't sing it nowadays, eh?"

"Oh, really, V.J.," Polly Mehta protested, "Carry on with your story."

"Alright," V.J. said, his voice a bit thin with hysteria. He was approaching something of a moment of confession.

"I can guess the end of this story," Andrea remarked confidently.

"Try not to," V.J. warned, swerving off the city road onto the main Bombay northern highway. "I was very naive at the time, eh? I must have been twenty or so. This Johnny gave me his hymn

book to share and I sang with the rest of them. It was good to hear human voices again, instead of the bloody landlady and her nonsense about being quiet on the stairs and washing the scrambled egg pan before I sleep each night and all this. Then the service ended and the people came out in dribs and drabs. I put my hands in the pockets of my coat and checked the time and walked on."

"This same Johnny came up behind me. He was sort of middle-aged, with a heavy centre parting in his hair and a thick navy blue coat. He asked me if I was a student and I said I was an undergraduate. I didn't know what was going on. He said he came from Kings Lynn, and he came every now and then to Cambridge because he liked talking to intelligent people, especially students from overseas. He asked me if I knew Matty, and he mentioned him three or four times, Matty Shonona from Rhodesia, and I said I didn't."

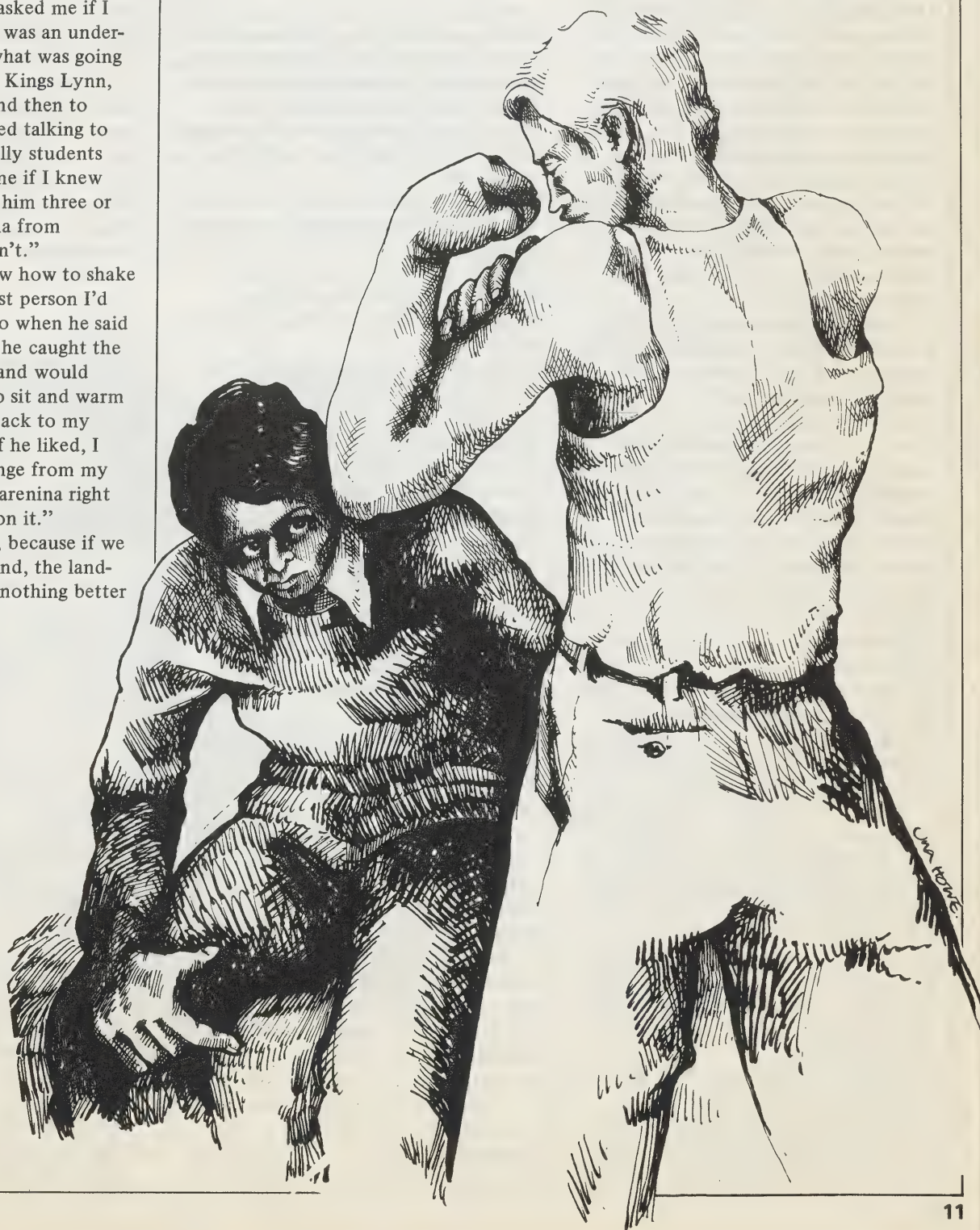
"Frankly, I didn't know how to shake him off and he was the first person I'd talked to for eight days. So when he said he had three hours before he caught the train back to Kings Lynn and would really appreciate a place to sit and warm up, I said he could come back to my room for a cup of coffee if he liked, I thought it would be a change from my project of reading Anna Karenina right through and taking notes on it."

"We crept up the stairs, because if we had made the slightest sound, the landlady, who seemed to have nothing better

to do, would turn down her television and shout up the stairs about it being a quiet house. This time she didn't hear me enter."

"He told me his name was Simon and I told him that my friends called me V.J. but my real name was Vijay. He had a silver tooth which gleamed when he smiled. He sat himself in the one chair the landlady had given me. I really had no idea of what was going on, so I put on the kettle and sat on the bed. He told

me all about his mother and how he lived with her and looked after her, and she looked after him. I told him about my mother, but the bugger wasn't interested. He said he didn't have any girl friends and I thought he was trying to make me feel sorry for him. He said his father was a right bastard and had been in Burma, and that his father had told him that Indians were very hygienic and clean and had a bath every day and didn't sweat heavily and plaster themselves with



all these artificial deodorants. Then I began to feel a bit uneasy, and he must have sensed that the game was up, because he got very abrupt. He took off his shirt and said he wanted to show me his muscles and his smooth skin, because he felt that just like an Indian, he was really very clean and hygienic."

"In those days there wasn't all this hullabaloo about Gay Lib and all this, and I thought this fellow is a homo and he thinks I'm a homo — that's what we used to call them in college in Delhi. So I told him that I didn't want to feel his muscles and he could put his shirt right back on again. He got insistent and got up from his chair and started raising his voice. Then I thought I'd better feel his muscles or the landlady will come up and kick my arse into the street. I got up from the bed and just gave him a little feel and the guy really flexed up his forearm and told me that his mother shouldn't have muscles at the ripe old age of seventy, but she did have, even better than his."

"I just touched him lightly. By that time I knew what he was leading to. Then he said, 'Look, it's Christmas, do you have any talcum powder?' I said I didn't have any."

"You don't?" he said 'I always prepare myself for these things. I've got some in my coat pocket. I'd like to powder you.' I decided that that was enough. He started pulling out his talcum powder. I suppose he thought I'd led him on. I just told him I was tired and he had to go, I had a lot of work to do."

"Did he go?" asked Polly, craning over the back seat.

"He went in the end," V.J. said, "I told him I didn't want his wretched powder, and that my landlady's boy-friend was a policeman. He was very hesitant, but he went. The next term he tracked me down in college. He knocked at the door of my room at the wrong time. I had this bird from the hospital, a nurse. I didn't recognise him at first. He had shaved himself bald and he was wearing a leather jacket and jeans, like some kind of tough. I didn't want him to come in. I was just about making it with this bird. He was very serious. He said he wanted to talk to me. I said I had nothing to do with him and he'd better go."

'I'm Simon,' he said, 'You must remember Simon of Great St. Mary's.'

Then he said he had to talk to me whatever I said, because fate had decreed it. I just said I didn't want him in my room.

There was a guy called Winters who lived next to me and he came out, disturbed by the shouting. He was a big rugby type, and we used to talk and drink coffee late at night after our first days at the great University. The bird was standing behind me and listening to all this.

'I don't know you and I don't want to know you,' I said to him.

'There's no-one else,' he said. 'You have to know me. I was in your room at Fitzwilliam Street. I told you about my mother.'

I shouted.

His face twitched. Then it all came out.

He said his mother had died on Christmas Day in Kings Lynn while he was powdering me. I didn't know where to look. I said he wasn't powdering me, I'd stopped him, and then I said I was sorry about his mother.

'Only you and I know why she died, why her heart broke on that day and at that time.'

'You're mad. You'd better get out.'

He was crying now. Then this guy Winters who'd been watching the show stepped in.

'Is this geezer bothering you, V.J.?' he asked. I didn't know what to say so I said 'Yes'.

Winters stepped up to the fellow, his chest touching the man's shirt.

'Listen little man, piss off out of it or I'll knock your head off.'

Then he pushed the man, and he stumbled backwards.

'You heard me,' Winters said, standing at the top of the stairs. The man retreated, and at the bottom of our staircase he let out an awful wail which lingered after he'd gone into the quadrangle and the cold night."

"Did you ever see him again?" Polly asked.

"I want Andrea to tell her story," V.J. said, "I think I've said enough."

"No, but did he ever come back?" Nita asked.

"His ghost came back," V.J. said.

"Maybe we can use it as a script about Indians in Britain, V.J." Polly said.

"I want to hear Andrea's story," V.J. insisted, "Is it going to be about Christmas with Swami River?"

"Oh, please, V.J. the experience of the ashram has been pretty traumatic for Andrea, don't rub it in," said Nita.

"Don't worry. I don't mind. Actually I was going to tell you about my last Christmas in Britain. At the ashram we forgot about Christmas. I forgot about

Christmas till I got a card from my parents, and everybody else at the ashram got cards too, but nobody admitted it until it came out, and then we had a laugh and he knew what was going on and he said we ought to have laugh so we did."

"Why laugh about it. It's just religion. Just like in your ashram," Polly said.

"It's not, you know," Andrea said, "I'm finished with all that, but I still have some respect for what they're trying to do. My parents think they have to send me a Christmas card. If I was Livingstone, they'd try and get Stanley to carry a Christmas present to me in darkest Africa. I can't get away from them. I think now that I came to get away from them and from everything that they represent and their turkey and pudding and cards and presents and bargains."

"You could just not go home for Christmas," I tentatively suggested.

"I tried that. That's what my story is about. Do you want to hear it?"

"I think we're nearly there," V.J. said, "Do you want to save it for the way back?"

"It depends on what the miracle's like," Polly said.

It wasn't much of a miracle. There were crowds. Nita wasn't concerned about the miracle or the crowds, she kept asking V.J. if he could see Joseph. He said he couldn't. We parked the car a street away and walked with the crowds to the church of Our Lady of Loretto on the mount in Bandra. The Jesuses and Marys in plaster colours were being sold from gas-lit circles. The crowds pressed to the gathering and flooded the street outside the improvised altar. There were candles and the pilgrims sang hymns without musical accompaniment in a groaning yet tuneless murmur. Then she was presented, the girl with Jesus in her throat. A local parish priest, more conscious of the publicity than of his duty to Christ incarnate, introduced her. She was wrapped in a white saree and supported by a man and a woman. She seemed to be swooning, dragged on stage against her will. The crowd was hushed. No Jesus spoke from her throat. There was only a low moan, like a wail of pain, and then the congregation, awed by the sight of the frail, dark girl who was swooning with pain, her eyes turned upwards as if to heaven, began to sing. V.J. and Andrea joined in the song. The rest of us didn't know it.

The candles, which the pilgrims held, illuminated the darkness of the mud road in which we stood before the simple brick and stucco church. Concrete Bombay had given way here to groves of trees on our left and our right and the slums, shanties of mud and tin and thatch, crooked as the devil's smile, as homely as the faith that built the church, leered through and rested amongst the trees.

The miracle didn't amount to much. A girl in pain, her throat swollen, swaddled in the incense of joss-sticks, bewildered and haunted by the elaborate gestures of her publicity agents who prayed and pronounced around her, and the cries of the faithful who fell tearful and screaming at her feet, attempting to embrace her neck and being kept off in a play of hysteria. "I couldn't see Joseph," Nita said as we got back into the car and began the journey back to the commercial and

socialite bays of Bombay. "That poor girl. It's filthy the way they exploit these poor people." Andrea seemed despondent. Polly didn't. It was as much of a miracle as she'd expected. She knew Bombay.

"So what about your story then, Andrea?" V.J. said.

"It's not much of a story,"

"Your last Indian disillusion," V.J. said, "First the swami and Jesus, and not even a political glimmer in sight."

"It was politics that pissed me off with Britain," Andrea said. "You know the Christmas I was telling you about when I didn't go home? I was with some friends. They called themselves comrades. We were in a group, the Lambeth branch. All of us, or most of us, decided not to participate in the rat-race of Christmas and we stayed in Brixton. Do you know it? It's a kind of south London ghetto, with a lot of blacks. We were going to have our own

socialist Christmas party and this guy Mathew, who was the secretary, gave me me sixty pounds to buy the booze for the whole collective. Most of the branch were teachers and social workers. When it came to doing the work for the social none of them were there. We'd been through a lot of argument about the Christmas issue of a newspaper we used to write called 'Blaze'. It was supposed to symbolise the ghetto, on fire."

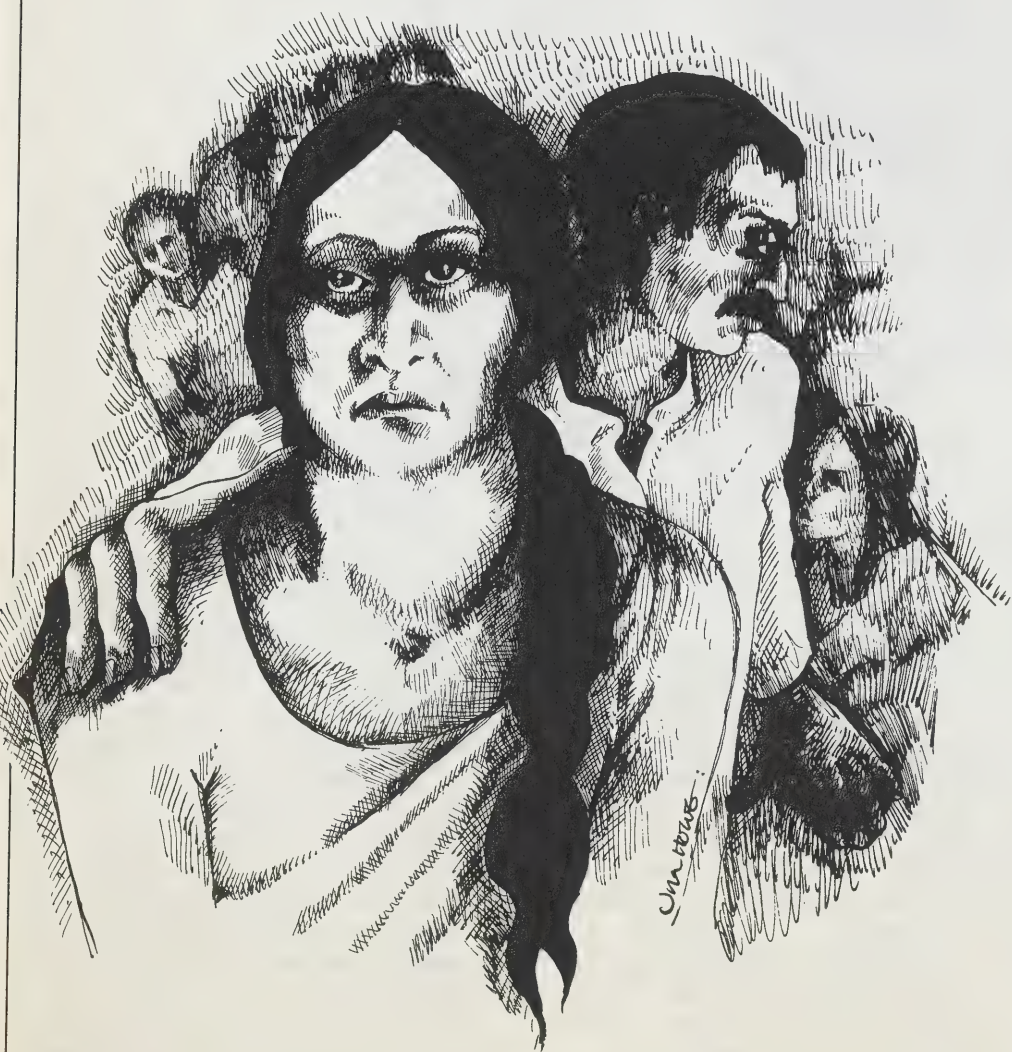
"I wasn't in much of a mood to do the dirty work for the collective. They always got the women to do it. This fellow, Mathew, was the great intellectual of the group and when he said go out and get the drink, you just did it. It was Christmas Eve and I set out with my bag full of money and head full of shit. I must have walked down the same street in Brixton a thousand times. I used to live there and I never had any hassle. Our place was raided a couple of times by the pigs and we were burgled a couple of times, but they never got anything because we never had much money. There was a junked-out record player and a clapped-out black and white telly and jumble sale clothes and not much else."

"I was walking to the off-licence when they came up from behind me, three black youths. One of them started walking alongside me as though he was accompanying me. The other two were behind, breathing down my neck, so I started walking faster. I was a bit scared, so I stopped and said, 'Get away from me, leave me alone.'

"We don't want nuttin' but yuh donze, money. Gimme," this young man says. There wasn't anyone else on the street. I looked straight in his face, I was dead scared, but I think he was nervous too because I could see he was sweating and the sweat stood out on his broad nostrils and his clean-shaven lip.

"Let me see your bag," one of them said, I clutched my bag tight and he jerked it from me and began digging in it. I was furious now. So I grabbed the bag back from him.

"Why are you doing this?" I said, and felt stupid asking it. I threw everything in the bag onto the pavement. I thought maybe a passing car would stop, or someone would walk by. There wasn't anybody. Christmas had frozen Brixton. Everything came out of the bag — my diary, small change, hankies, make-up, Lil-lets, hair-brush, pens, letters





everything. One of the youths picked the money up from the pile. I wanted to say something to them. By that time I knew they wouldn't do anything to me. So I said, 'You can't do this to me, I'm a trade unionist.'

'Keep the change,' one of them said and all three of them laughed and they ran, as fast as I've seen anyone run. I didn't go back to the group. I didn't want them to go to the police and I didn't want them to start a debate, like they would, about the lumpenproletariat in capitalist society and all this shit. So I just went home, picked up a few clothes and a cheque book and took a taxi and train to my parents' place in Dorset. After Christmas I came to India."

"And the swami robbed you here," V.J. said.

Andrea didn't reply.

"What about your story, Farrukh?" Polly asked.

"We're nearly in Colaba aren't we?"

"You'll come in for a drink, before I drop you," V.J. said.

We were back on the terrace with fresh glasses of imported whiskey when the key turned in the door of the darkened drawing-room and a figure staggered in. "He's drunk again," Nita said.

"I'll deal with this, V.J. said, getting up from the cane chair and making towards the figure in the shadows, switching on the drawing room light as he approached Joseph.

"Everyone, Merry Christmas," Joseph said, staggering on the Persian carpet.

"Go into the kitchen and go to sleep, you're drunk," V.J. said sternly.

"Me? drunk on a holy night like this?"

Joseph asked, his feet stepping one in front of the other. "I've seen a miracle," he added in Hindi, "a sister-fucking miracle."

"You go straight to bed or I'll dismiss you right now and throw you into the street and call the police," V.J. said.

His tone was low and menacing.

"Sahib, listen to me before you threaten a poor man." Joseph said, "Jesus is born again today. Out of the throat of a virgin comes the son of God, a mist, like incense rises and the son of God speaks to those who believe.

Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. I am the meek. I am a simple man, earn my living, hundred rupees a month, simple pleasures. Never touch drink."

"Go to bed before you inherit a bloody kick," V.J. said.

Brixton Prison,
Jebb Avenue,
London, S.W.2.
England.

Dear Mama,
Good day.
I hope dat when
deze few lines reach you,
they may find you in di bes' af helt'.

Mama,
I really doan know how fi tell you dis,
cause I did mek a salem pramis'
fi tek care a lickie Jim
an' try mi bes' fi look out fi him.

Mama,
Ah really did try mi bes',
but none—di—les,
mi sorry fi tell you seh
mi poor lickie Jim get arres'.

It woz di miggie a di rush howah
when everybady jus' a hus'le an' a bus'le
fi goh home fi dem evenin' showah;
mi an' Jim jus' stan-up
waitin' pan a bus,
nat causin' no fus',
when all an a sudden
a police van pull-up.

Out jump t'ree policeman
di' hole a dem carryin' batan.
Dem walk straight up to mi an' Jim.
One a dem hol' him in;
seh him tekin' him in;
Jim tell him fi let goh a him
far him noh dhu not'n,
an' him naw tief, nat even a but'n'.

Jim start to wriggle.
Di police start to giggle.

Mama,
mek Ah tell you whey dem dhu to Jim;
Mama,
mek Ah tell you whey dem dhu to him:
dem t'ump him in him belly
an' it turn to jelly
dem lick him pan him back
an' him rib get pap
dem lick him pan him he'd
but it tuff like le'd
dem kick him in him seed
an' it started to bleed

Mama, Ah
Ah jus' could'n' stan'-up deh
an' noh dhu not'n'.

Soh mi jook one in him eye
an' him started to cry;
mi t'ump one in him mout'
an' him started to shout;
mi kick one pan him shin
an' him started to spin,
mi t'ump him pan him chin
an' him drap pan a bin

an' crash
an' de'd.

Mama,
more policeman come dung
an' beat mi to di grung;
dem charge Jim fi sus
dem charge me fi murdah.

Mama,
doan fret,
doan get depres'
an' doun-hearted.
Be af good courage
till I hear fram you

I remain,
your son,
Sonny.

SONNY'S LETTER

(Anti-Sus poem)

people sayin' dis
people sayin' dat
'bout di yout' af today
how dem carryin' on a way
an' it noh funny
it noh funny

dem wi tek chance
fi get a lickie kile
dem wi tek chance
fi live-it-up a while
dem wi tek chance
fi live-it-up in style
dem wi tek chance
fi goh jump an' prance
dem wi tek chance
far dem love blues dance
dem wi tek chance
an' dem dont count di caas

people sayin' dis
people sayin' dat
'bout di yout' af today
how dem causin' affray
an' it noh funny
it noh funny

dem wi tek chance
an' dem love cuss raas
dem wi tek chance
dem wi skip dem claas
dem wi tek chance
fi goh pap a lickie style
dem wi tek chance
dem dhu it all di while
dem wi tek chance
but some a dem laas
dem wi tek chance
an' dem dont count di caas

people sayin' dis
people sayin' dat
'bout di yout' af today
'bout di way dem stay
an' it noh funny
it noh funny

dem wi tek chance
fi get a lickie kally
dem wi tek chance
wid you lickie sistah Sally
dem wi tek chance
far dem feel dem force
dem wi tek chance
but dem gat no course
dem wi tek chance
but dem is nat advanced
dem wi tek chance
an' dem dont count di caas

people sayin' dis
people sayin' dat
'bout di yout' af today
how dem really stay
an' it noh funny
no sah, it noh funny.

IT NOH FUNNY

Young And Black

Come to Mecca
by Farrukh Dhondy.
Published by Collins.
Price £2.95p

Reviewed by
Gillian Peters

If you are in search of an insight into the difficulties faced by young black people growing up in London today, as they struggle to deal with the oppressing authority they encounter at school, out in the streets and at work, then I suggest you read 'Come to Mecca' a collection of six short stories by Farrukh Dhondy. (Collins £2.95).

Farrukh Dhondy is also the author of a collection of short stories titled 'East End At Your Feet' (MacMillans Topliner) and the novel 'Seige of Babylon' (Macmillans).

He is a teacher at a South London comprehensive school and an activist in the black political movement in Britain.

Dhondy is an acute observer of young people and has 'an eye for language, whether it's taunts in the streets, sass in the classroom, poetry in a West Indian disco or banter and backchat in an Indian cafe'. But more to the point, he is a frank, critical appraiser of the state educational system, actively involved in making us aware of the ways in which this system works against black children.

In all six stories — 'Come to Mecca', 'Two Kinda Truth', 'Iqbal Cafe', 'Free Dinners', 'Salt on a Snake's tail' and 'Go play Butterfly' — Dhondy portrays real kids and if you, like myself, grew up in London and attended a London school you will be able to identify with some of the characters and their problems.

In 'Two Kinda Truth' and 'Free Dinners' we meet Bonny and Lorraine confronting authority at school. Let's take Bonny. He has a talent for talking and a fascination

for words. The only teacher able to capture his attention in the classroom is the teacher of English, nicknamed Wordsy. Wordsy opens out to Bonny the beauty of poetry, the kind written by Eliot and Wordsworth. But the kind of poetry that Bonny is exposed to outside school and begins to write himself, is essentially black, aimed at roots level and calls to mind the poetry of Linton Johnson. When Bonny reads one of his own poems in class Wordsy's reaction, one of disapproval, does not come as a surprise: 'The poem is too much of a slogan' he says 'to be poetry it has to have the sound, not of propaganda but of, well, how shall I put it, of truth'. He is unable to see that Bonny's poetry represents a different kind of truth. It is the new poetry of the black community telling of black people's struggle in British society, the need to be strong and to fight the oppression so long endured. Wordsy's inability to grasp this comes as a blow to Bonny who then leaves school and finds, within his own community, an audience who understands and appreciates the sentiments of his poetry.

Now, let us look at the enigmatic character of Lorraine as seen through the eyes of the narrator of the story, 'Free Dinners'. Lorraine a drama student, is talented at sports. Her tough, resilient nature is shown in the way she confronts her teachers. The narrator tells of how their class teacher would make himself and Lorraine suffer for having free dinners: 'Just the way he called your name at the end of the register made you crawl and feel two feet small. He'd collect the money from the other kids and make Lorraine and me queue up separately at his table'. But whereas he, at the end of the first week, could no longer endure the

indignity of it, and resorts to hiding in the toilet until the register had been called, Lorraine remains outwardly unconcerned by it. Despised by her classmates and with no friends of her own Lorraine proceeds through school in her unconcerned way. Signs of rebellion begin to appear which win her admiration from her classmates and culminates on Prize Day when she turns up to receive her prize for drama outrageously dressed in 'black velvet hot pants and a black silk shirt and had made herself up to look right tarty with crimson lipstick and heavy eyeshadow'. Lorraine succeeds in confronting her insensitive teachers with defiance but unhappily ends up on the streets.

In both stories there is much humour as well as pain in the picture the author paints of school life. With skill he captures the atmosphere of teasing, backchat and pranks that exist in the classroom.

Esther, the other young black woman in Farrukh's collection, features in 'Go Play Butterfly'. She represents the majority of young black people with origins in the West Indies, who are introduced to the Carnival festival through their parents and older members of the West Indian community for whom Carnival is an essential part of their culture. Encouraged to take part in Carnival by her parents, Esther gets thrown into the company of young men for the first time and signs of her sexual awakening begin to take place. She has to learn to cope with this on her own, together with the deep attraction she begins to feel towards Jojo, the young man who makes her costume. In this story the author captures the excitement of preparing and participating in Carnival, and he does not spare us a taste of the violence that follows.

In 'Come to Mecca', 'Iqbal's Cafe' and 'Salt on a Snake's Tail', Dhondy gives us an insight into the lives of Asian youths that I found very enlightening. In 'Come to Mecca' we get a look into their working lives; the narrator tells us 'all of us had done some tailoring for our fathers and mothers at home. Everyone knows machining in the East End. When you are ten years old you begin to forget being a pilot on Bangladesh Airlines and start thinking of being a cutter or machinist'.

We have Shahid, the Asian youth, refusing to be exploited and going on strike in order to put pressure on his employer who wants to reduce the already meagre wages of the young workers. Then, there is the view of Asian youths on white girls, influenced by their parents and older members of their community advising them not to mix with 'rubbish white girls'.

In 'Salt On a Snake's Tail' there is the importance placed on the Muslim religion



and the difficulties faced by Asian youths as they try to come to terms with the demands it makes on them. Also highlighted in this story is the racial persecution endured by the Bengalis. Jolil, an ardent Bruce Lee fan who wants to be a Kung Fu fighter, finds himself defying his non-violent and God fearing father in his refusal to turn the other cheek when they are attacked by white youths in Brick Lane. In this same area the scene of a violent racial attack takes place in the story 'Iqbal's Cafe'. In this cafe we meet the Asian youths who congregate there and its garrulous, one legged proprietor—Langda. Farrukh Dhondy is at home in this atmosphere as in the classroom and he brings to life the jesting and the petty quarrels of the customers.

The problems faced by Shahid, Bonny, Lorraine, Jolil and Esther mirror those the majority of black young people have to come to grips with daily. By injecting humour into his stories, Farrukh Dhondy succeeds in making this collection serious, as well as, entertaining reading.

Stories For The Young

Sati the Rastifarian
Omar at Christmas

Children of the Night by E 'gar White,
Illustrated by Dindga McCannon.

Lothrop, Lee & Shephard £2.25 each.

Distributed by Bogle L'Ouverture,
5a Chignell Place, London W13.

Add 10% of cost of books if buying by mail order.

Reviewed by

Rosemary Stones

Three stunning picture books from the West Indian playwright Edgar White, who has lived for many years in the States, are currently being distributed in the United Kingdom after US publication in the early '70s. 'Sati the Rastifarian' and 'Omar at Christmas' are suitable for children up to about nine while 'Children of the Night' is for 8–12 year olds.

Taken together, these three books make up a profound and lyrical statement to children about the hard and lonely journey of the black immigrant — from rural penury (Sati) to urban proletariat exploitation (Omar) to the long hot



nights of the street riot (Children of the Night). These books are clearly as relevant to children in Britain as to those in the US.

The beauty and poetry of White's texts and McCannon's forceful woodcut illustrations will linger with adult as well as child reader. But White and McCannon have also achieved, uniquely in my view a fusion of the successful picture story book for young children and a questioning, socialist perspective without any resorting to tortuous allegories or the boredom of the tract. Thus, Omar rides home in the bus on Christmas Eve beside his mother who has finished her day at work and fallen asleep. 'Why you so tired Mom?' he wonders, 'Why do you always have to be so tired?' White may ask the question but happily respects the child enough to let her/him supply the answer.

White is a tender chronicler of childhood revealing inner emotions, the fears and the courage of his young heroes. The sounds and smells of the city through the seasons, at night and in the daytime run through the stories. These are books that children will understand and cherish.



Voices Already Heard

Finding A Voice

by Amrit Wilson

Price £2.50p. Published by Virago

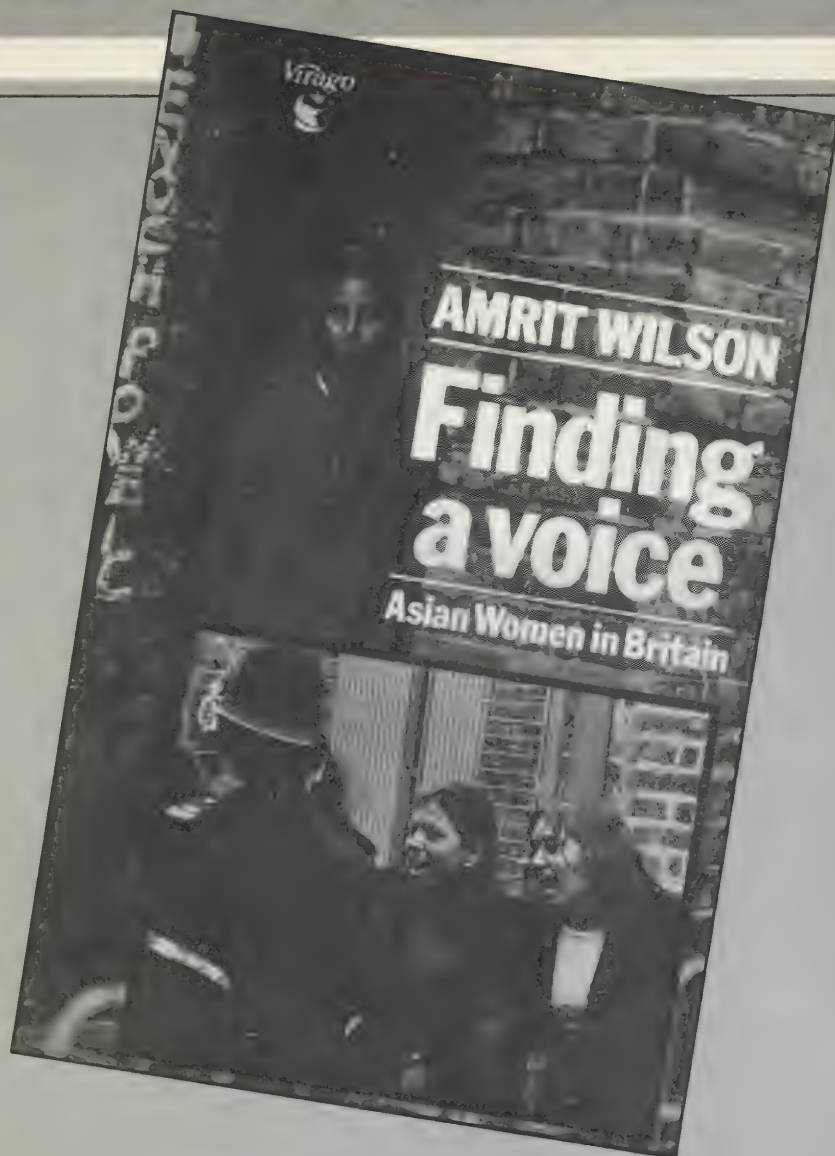
Reviewed by

Mala Dhondy

Amrit Wilson's book, based on a series of interviews with Asian women living in Britain, comes complete with maps, geographical notes, sociological charts and a glossary which explains a variety of Indian words, ranging from Allah to Vatalebada. Virago, the feminist publishing company, have produced a very professional and neat little package. Nothing modest about the book at all — everything is covered. And the interviews themselves, which make up the substance of the book, span every conceivable 'type' of Asian woman. The newly arrived immigrant, from a rural background, facing the isolation and horrors of rock bottom living in Britain's urban slums ('I have a burning fever — feel me, sister, feel me') through to the young woman, born in East Africa, who wants white boyfriends but still prefers to marry her own kind ('I fell in love with an English boy, Steve. . . we discussed Marxism and feminism, those were the two main things'). It is certainly a very ambitious book.

In addition to the interviews she has done herself, Ms Wilson also uses extracts from a number of interviews published in other journals and newspapers which date back to 1974. This is, of course, an indication that Asian women, through their own activity, had established themselves as a political force long before this particular book was put together. I am not being pedantic in drawing attention to this fact, but because I find the title of the book somewhat presumptuous. To call it 'Finding A Voice' implies that the women interviewed were previously dumb. Clearly they were not. Not only were they articulate, they had won for themselves an international platform some years ago (see Race Today July 1974, Radical America Sept/Oct 1974, to mention a few). Perhaps, I have misunderstood the title and it is Ms Wilson who has found a voice.

Anyway, be that as it may, the book is undoubtedly compiled with a strong sense of feminist sympathy. It emphasises the



tyranny of the Hindu joint family system, arranged marriages, where sex on the wedding night amounts to rape, and focuses on the perversity of the Asian male ego. The interviews have been structured and selected to portray just this, and what emerges is a grim picture of 'oppression' and 'exploitation'.

Given that this is the central purpose of the book, the poem with which it opens is a sensible choice. Titled 'The Prisoner', it sets the pace for the interviews that follow. Asian culture, we are told (and shown) is at the root of the problem and it is from these age old traditions that the corruption of social relationships flows. To be fair to Ms Wilson, she does concede that the oppression of Asian women in Britain is further aggravated by racism: "... they may feel that when oppressed as women they are being oppressed as individuals, but racism is an attack on them as part of their family and community, and these things cannot be separated in the identity of a woman". Fine. But if the community itself and, in particular, Asian men are so backward and bigoted, what hope is there of an alliance at any level?

There is a certain logic (which I can see but don't share) in the prisoner theory. It

defines a reality and then hints at a way forward. There are those who escape, those who attempt escapes and, finally, those who have neither the opportunity nor the courage to consider such an escape. Are these really the only options open to us as Asian women? Shahida, one of the women she interviews, has this to say: "... Many people say white people are no good, their culture is no good. But I don't agree, their culture is good because if a man and woman are happy they can live their lives together, if not they can leave each other and marry again. . . Among us, how many are there who enjoy their lives? The question does not arise. . . " So what is the solution? Can we all marry white men? Or must we, like Babli (another woman interviewed) live alone in order to regain our self respect. "Slowly, I am regaining what I lost — my human dignity" (she has just sued her husband for divorce) "Reading Nimaz helps me. Islam considers men and women equal. It is men who have ruined it with misinterpretation." Both these women I have just quoted are interviewed in the book's final chapter, 'Sisters in Struggle'. Interestingly, Jayabhen Desai (Grunwick strike) and Sharda Bhen (Imperial Typewriters strike) come under another category, 'Work out-

side the home'. So 'struggle' is about leaving our tyrannical husbands. Given the percentage of Asian women who do, in fact, leave their men and their families, this struggle must surely be in it's embryonic form. As an Asian woman myself, living in Britain, I think this particular perspective is not only ahistorical but also shallow and a bit absurd. Just as the Asian family itself has a tradition, the struggle by women within that family structure has a tradition too. For instance, my grandmother had an arranged marriage at the age of 14, my mother a semi-arranged one at 22 and so on.

In the process of this fight independence, self determination if you like, Asian men have changed too. They have had to keep pace with a changing world and, in particular, with the struggle of Asian women. Ms Wilson seems to be completely unaware of this process.

The weakness of the interviews, all of them, is that they give the impression that Asian women have begun waking up to the reality of their oppression only since they landed in Britain. It doesn't ring true. Neither does the account, again through interviews, of an idyllic peasant existence back home where "the men would go to work, the younger boys would go to school while we girls spent the day playing and frolicking. Life was so lovely". In another place, we are presented with a description of twilight in an Asian village, with the song of the boatmen floating up from the river, while women cook for each other and spend their time "oiling and combing" each other's hair. Not a word about the economic pressures or the stark poverty of village life. I am quite prepared to accept that all that is recorded was actually said. That is not the point. The selection of the material is such that something really vital is lacking.

Apart from what the book lacks, I find some of its content positively offensive. The bits and pieces which pad the interviews provide a sort of sociological survey of the Asian way of life. Written not for Asian women but for white liberals who might want to understand what makes us function or not function as the case may be, Amrit Wilson slips into making the occasional racist remark herself. Take this: "If marrying out of your caste is considered so drastically wrong it can be imagined how 'running off' with a West Indian or an Englishman is seen; and yet it seems to be endemic among Gujarati girls in some parts of Britain". Endemic? The definition of 'endemic' in Chambers English Dictionary is, 'a disease constantly or generally present in a place owing to local conditions'.

What else can I tell you? Read the book and judge for yourself. It is the first book of its kind published in Britain.

DRAMA

Blazing A Trail

Empire Road, BBC2 television series, screened from October 31 to November 28. Produced by Peter Ansorge and directed by Alex Marshall.

Reviewed by
Akua Rugg

"Empire Road", the new weekly black TV serial launched by BBC2 amidst a flood of publicity, concerns the daily lives of West Indians and Asians who live in the same neighbourhood in Handsworth, Birmingham. It is scripted but not directed by a black person, and nearly all the characters are black.

Michael Abbenetts, Guyanese scriptwriter for the series, obviously believes that people rather than politics make the world go round and the ratings go up. "Empire Road" therefore concentrates on how the West Indians and Asians in the street relate to each other. Their relationship to white society does not come in for detailed examination.

The chief character in the series is Everton Bennett, a Guyanese immigrant, who, during the 20 years he has been living in Britain, has acquired a supermarket and four houses which he lets. His ambitions and frustrations provide the dynamic for the whole series. Thrifty, industrious and intolerant of life styles that differ from his own, Bennett finds that the life he has so carefully constructed for himself crumbles at the edges where he comes into contact with other members of his community.

For a start, there is his own family continually stabbing him in the back. Walter, his live-in brother-in-law, is responsible for letting his houses to undesirable tenants. In one house Asians have turned the front room into a mosque. In yet another, Bennett is choked both by the ganja fumes and by the fact that the tenants in this particular house are unemployed "Rastas". His teenage son Marcus has fallen for a pretty Asian neighbour much to the disgust of her father, and his wife's mother is planning to fly

from Guyana to share his home for an indefinite length of time.

These subjects — the pursuit of money and sex, escapes from mothers-in-law and other natural disasters of life — are the stuff that any popular weekly TV serial is made of. However, the distinguishing characteristic of a serial such as "Empire Road" is its power to compel an audience to watch it, episode after episode. The audience is usually held captive because it identifies with the lives of the characters who people the series. This process of identification can only take place if both director and scriptwriter pay scrupulous attention to detail of speech, mannerism, dress and decor. This vital ingredient seems to me to be missing from "Empire Road".

Certainly, West Indian and English viewers will find themselves in accord with Bennett's disparaging remarks about the Asian community. Bennett considers them ignorant heathens who do not realise a front room is a shrine in which TV rather than God is worshipped. Asian and English viewers will no doubt warm to Bennett's contempt for the situation of West Indian youth, their attitudes to work and peculiar way of dress.

Norman Beaton, the actor who plays Bennett, is a joy to watch, but "Empire Road" is not a one man show. In relation to him the other characters seem to be underdeveloped or marginal to the progres-

sion of plot in the series. Bennett's wife, Hortense, appears to have no other function than to prove that the nuclear family is alive and well within the West Indian community and to provide Bennett with a mother-in-law. This character, when she arrives fresh from Guyana, does not appear to have a Guyanese accent, nor does she use Guyanese idioms. The young Rastas, an important section of the the West Indian community, are made to seem ridiculous rather than rebellious, with one of them sporting a little Richard wig. More seriously, the relationship between the West Indian and Asian community is focused through the romance between sharp talking "sweet boy" Marcus and obedient and strictly brought up Ranjanaa. This is surely an unlikely turn of events given the social patterns of West Indian youth and the cultural norms of Asian society. The success of a serial like "Empire Road" depends largely on its capacity to persuade an audience to suspend disbelief, not on its ability to strain the audience's credulity.

On the credit side, Abbenetts has broken with the tradition that blacks must be presented on TV as either mentally deficient or socially delinquent. There is evidence that characters such as the stuttering and seemingly ineffectual Walter, and the "workshy" youth will, in succeeding episodes, challenge the supremacy of Bennett's ideas.



On the debit side, Abbensetts has made the fullest use of the distinctive characteristics of the black community. Where are the verbal fireworks that fill the air whenever West Indians are gathered together. A few anti-Asian "curry" jokes are no substitute for the creative and vivid use of language that West Indians are famous for. The overall impression given by "Empire Road" is that blacks are boring, conformist and complacent. Surely these are not the characteristics that distinguish the black community from any other section of British society today.

"Empire Road" is a trailblazer, in that it is a TV production that presents blacks as protagonists rather than mere foils for white characters. It is one, however, that on the evidence of the few episodes so far screened sputters rather than bursts with life. It is unfortunate also, that such a radical departure from the norms of British television broadcasting should have been made on BBC2, the TV channel popularly regarded as the one nobody watches.

Lacking Flair

Masada, written by Edgar White, directed by Rufus Collins. Performed at Keskidee from October 26 to November 12.

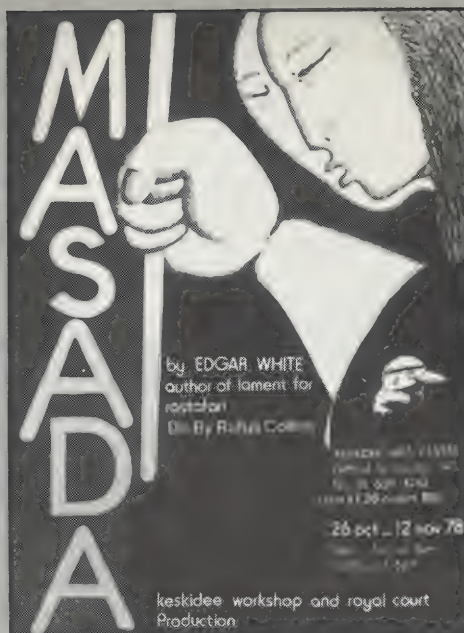
Reviewed by
Akua Rugg

Masada is a play written by Caribbean writer Edgar White, and presented by the Keskidee theatre workshop. Despite the fact that White has two successful productions at the Keskidee to his credit, Masada seems to be the kind of play that attracts the attention and funds of cultural bodies such as the Arts Council, but repels the kind of audiences that Keskidee should be seeking to build.

The central theme of the play — that an oppressed people must fight, even to the death, against their would-be masters, is interesting enough to black audiences. White has taken Masada, the fortress in which the Jews made their last stand against the Roman Empire, as a supreme symbol of rebellion and resistance. He transports and transforms Masada into a mythical town located in South Africa.

The play is divided into two parts. In the first act some of the characters travel to Masada, and in the second we witness the conditions of life of the people who live there.

The play opens with two of the characters boarding a Masada bound train. One of them, Bancroft, is blind, light



skinned, young and an heir to multi-millions. His travelling companion, Lazarus, furnishes him with sex, food, intellectual stimulus, human warmth and companionship. When the train crashes, on its way through Europe, Lazarus attempts to shake off Bancroft and run off with a fellow traveller, a pretty girl from Brixton. He is pressed back into service at gunpoint by the train's guards. They are acting on instructions from Bancroft's all seeing, all knowing, all powerful father.

On reaching Masada we discover that it consists of a huge rubbish dump, around which are clustered the shacks in which the inhabitants of the town live. The talk of the town is the trial and crucifixion of a Christ figure, a saviour of the people.

The play fails to hold the audience enthralled because White's intellectual and literary competence is not matched by a comparable instinctive theatrical flair. In the first half of the play, the relationship between Bancroft and Lazarus is used to good effect to emphasise the writer's views on the way the developed nations batten upon the Third World, but he is reduced, when inspiration apparently fails him, to falling back on characters relating Anancy stories, with no other function, it seems, than to give the play a Caribbean flavour and to fill in time.

The two major images within the play, the smooth running ordered life in Europe symbolised by the train, and the decay and desolation of life in Masada symbolised by the rubbish tip, are bold and imaginative theatrical devices. White, however, does not seem to be able to extend these theatrical metaphors by dialogue, or by any development of character and plot.

White poses the conflicts in Masada/ South Africa in the dramatic form of the social realism school. The characters who

live in Masada are easily identifiable — the "coloured" girl with problems of identity and alienation, the black woman who seeks a way out of her horrendous life through the sexual power she wields over man, and the Asian with his particular role in the South African racial and economic hierarchy. In trying to find a resolution for these conflicts, he stumbles into the realms of mysticism and tumbles dialogue, characters and themes all over the stage, leaving one feeling mystified rather than enlightened, not to mention frustrated and finally bored.

Masada is an important play in that White raises many topics that preoccupy blacks. The play touches on the theme of the international nature of the struggles of blacks from Brixton to Bulawayo. It bears on shifting power relations between people of differing classes, sexes and races. But all these strengths within the play are negated by the playwright's lack of theatrical vibrancy and power.

The play is saved from being a total disaster by its director Rufus Collins. He uses actors and stage effects to their fullest advantage. Indeed the sets which were superbly conceived and executed dominated the production, whilst the actors of Keskidee workshop have developed into disciplined and competent ensemble players. David Haynes, in the role of the friendly neighbourhood leper, is outstandingly good.

Masada points to the dilemma of black theatre in this country at the present time. We have, at least in Rufus Collins, a director of unquestionably high calibre. There is a reservoir of acting talents proven and unproven to be tapped. But there is a dearth of playwrights to develop the capabilities of our black dramatic artists to the full.

Out Of Babylon

Rasta In A Babylon — A Documentary Film by Howard Johnson (National Film School).

Reviewed by
Linton K. Johnson

The Rastafarian movement was born out of the anti-colonialist struggles of the Jamaican people. It assumed, at once, like so many forms in the Anti-colonial struggles, a marked religious character. Central to its theology is the deification of Haile Selassie.



With the defeat of the anti-colonial struggle in Jamaica, the religious aspect of the movement assumed greater importance, particularly in the post-independence period.

The fact that Rasta is alive and flourishing among blacks in Britain may seem somewhat puzzling to some observers. There are three main factors which account for this presence. Firstly, the anti-colonialist context of the struggle of blacks in Britain; secondly, the rise of reggae music, and with it, a thriving sound system culture in Britain; and thirdly, the failure of the black power movement in Britain to capture and hold the imagination of disaffected young blacks. The decline of the black power movement, in the early seventies coincided with the rise of the Rasta cult. Given the anti-colonial context of blacks in Britain and the prominence of reggae music in our cultural lives, it is not at all surprising that the

Rasta dominated lyrical content of reggae, replete with anti-colonialist, anti-establishment, black nationalist and other sentiments, should find ready acceptance amongst Britain's young blacks. The pervasiveness of reggae music and the sentiments it expressed is, indeed, the single important factor which accounts for the Rasta presence in Britain, as it does in Trinidad, the USA, Canada, Antigua, Dominica and even Nigeria.

The London Film Festival's programme at the National Film Theatre, provided the setting for the preview of the first documentary film on Rastas in Britain, a section of the black community which many outsiders find fascinating. Outsiders are attracted by the dreadlocks Rasta hair-style, their pronounced manner of dress, their biblical language, the fact that they deify Haile Selassie and want to be repatriated back to Africa.

Written, edited and directed by

Howard Johnson, a former director of the Keskidee Theatre Workshop, *Rasta In A-Babylon* revolves around a small group of South London Rastas, the Twelve Tribes of Israel, who are affiliated to the Twelve Tribe Rastas in Jamaica. This 40 minute film is Howard Johnson's first as an apprentice film-maker at the National Film School.

Johnson has genuinely attempted to render accessible to the outsider a seemingly culturally exclusive section of the black community. His approach to his subject matter is a sympathetic one, allowing his subjects to speak for themselves rather than bringing the usual super-imposed sociological analysis to bear on the film. We are shown a number of memorable sequences which include a bible reading and reasoning session; a dread making a very poor job of answering a question posed by an uninitiated youth who seemed well versed in matters biblical; some rare footage of Marcus Mosiah Garvey, clad in imperialist garb; Rastas talking about themselves and their world-view; a festival celebrating the birthday of Haile Selassie, which vividly captures the feel of the Rasta ritual of song and dance, drumming and chanting. The festival also included fiery speeches by a Twelve Tribe brethren and sistren. Among the audience are reggae artists Bob Marley and Delroy Washington, both Twelve Tribe Rastas, leaping to the Nyahbingi drums of the Rasta drummers on stage. The popular British based Rasta orientated reggae band, Aswad, also appear in the film, playing an entertaining set to a captive audience. There is also a scene of a confrontation between Rastas and the police at their St. Agnes residence. These visual images are connected by a somewhat superficial narrative which does not allow us an insight into what we are seeing on the screen.

The major weakness of the film lies in the director's approach to his subject. By getting the Rastas to speak for themselves, Howard has avoided one sociological trap only to fall into another. The Rastas' views of themselves, for example, could have been balanced by soliciting the views of other sections of the black community on Rastas in Britain. Moreover, too often in the film, the Rastas, who speak for themselves come over as being inarticulate and confused. By failing to make a real connection between reggae music culture in Britain and the Rastas, the film also fails to account for the presence of Rastas in A-Babylon. However, given the constraints of time (it's a 40 minute film) and finance (National Film School budget), Howard Johnson has made a reasonable film which will serve as introduction to the uninitiated. It is also a useful teaching aid for use in schools and colleges of further education.

MUSIC

Bridges Of Sound

Third World, live at the Rainbow Theatre, London, on November 22. Records available on the Island label.

Reviewed by

Linton K. Johnson

Since making their international debut in 1975, as the support band of Bob Marley and the Wailers tour, Third World have steadily grown in stature and status. During the last three years they have recorded three albums — 'Third World', 'Ninety-Six Degrees In The Shade', and their current release, 'Journey to Addis' — as well as touring America extensively, conquering new territories, bringing reggae live to audiences still not acquainted with the music.

Their recent concert at the London Rainbow Theatre, invoked a rapturous response from the capacity audience. Their chart success with the single 'Now That We Found Love' and the quality of their current album indicate that Third World, like Bob Marley and the Wailers, who made the first significant breakthrough, are now poised for international acclaim.

The fact that the members of the group come from Jamaican middle class back-

grounds is significant for their music in two respects. In the first place, it means that members of the band were allowed the facility of formal training in music from childhood; in the second place, it means that they are exposed to and influenced by American popular music, particularly soul and funk, the music of the Jamaican middle classes.

Third World's musical repertoire is not limited to these forms and styles but includes others as wide apart as rock and Jamaican religious cult music. However, the metropolitan factor is a decisive element in their music. This places them at a vantage point from which to make an impact on international pop.

Third World's music varies from the cross-over sounds of bands like War, Santana, and Bob Marley and the Wailers to the American West coast sounds of Earth Wind and Fire, influences which facilitate the task of building bridges of sound across the arena of international pop. If their first album showed us possibilities for bridge building, their second was a development of those possibilities. 'Journey To Addis', their current album, is a measure of the success they have achieved at this stage of their career. Here they have abandoned the more eclectic approach of their first album, directing their efforts the huge American market which remains largely untouched by reggae. They have arrived at a neat cross-over sound which links rockers rhythms to soul, jazz-funk and rock, a sound that captures the current disco feel and tempo on both sides of the Atlantic.

The album consists of seven songs including their hit single, "Now that We Found Love", and a cleverly arranged instrumental adaptation of Don Drummonds "Addis Abba" from the era of ska. Their playing has improved, their arrangements tighter, their music more

confident, more professional. A consistent feature of their music which appears on this album is the lyrical weakness of their own songs, which are often trite and somewhat contrived. But as their Rainbow concert shows, whatever they may lack lyrically they more than compensate for musically.

It was clear from the first number that Third World had come to play to a captive audience. The one hour and forty minutes set, consisting of something like fifteen numbers, began rather coldly with 'Tribal War', followed by three numbers from their new album: 'Cold Sweat', 'Cold Vibes' and 'Cool Mediation'. By their seventh number, 'Journey to Addis', they had worked up enough sweat and creative energy to bring the music to a lift-off point. Their musical ability and diversity was amply displayed, with each member of the band doubling up on percussion. The high level of thought and skill they put into their music was also evident. Each number was well rehearsed, with an element of mime on numbers like 'Street Dancing', giving the music an added lift. Particularly outstanding was the keyboard player, the lead guitarist and drummer. The overall effect was that of a very slick West Coast American band playing polished, professional music with a lot of showmanship. The high point of the show came with their rendition of 'Now That We Found Love' and everyone was off their seats, rocking.

'Lively up yourself and don't be no drag/for reggae is just another bag' sings Bob Marley. Third World has adopted this as a guiding principle. They realise that accessibility is the name of the game and have arrived at a polished stylised music that succeeds in building bridges of sound. The consequences of their breakthrough on the reggae international remains to be seen. There are other bands like Inner Circle and Zappow waiting on the periphery.



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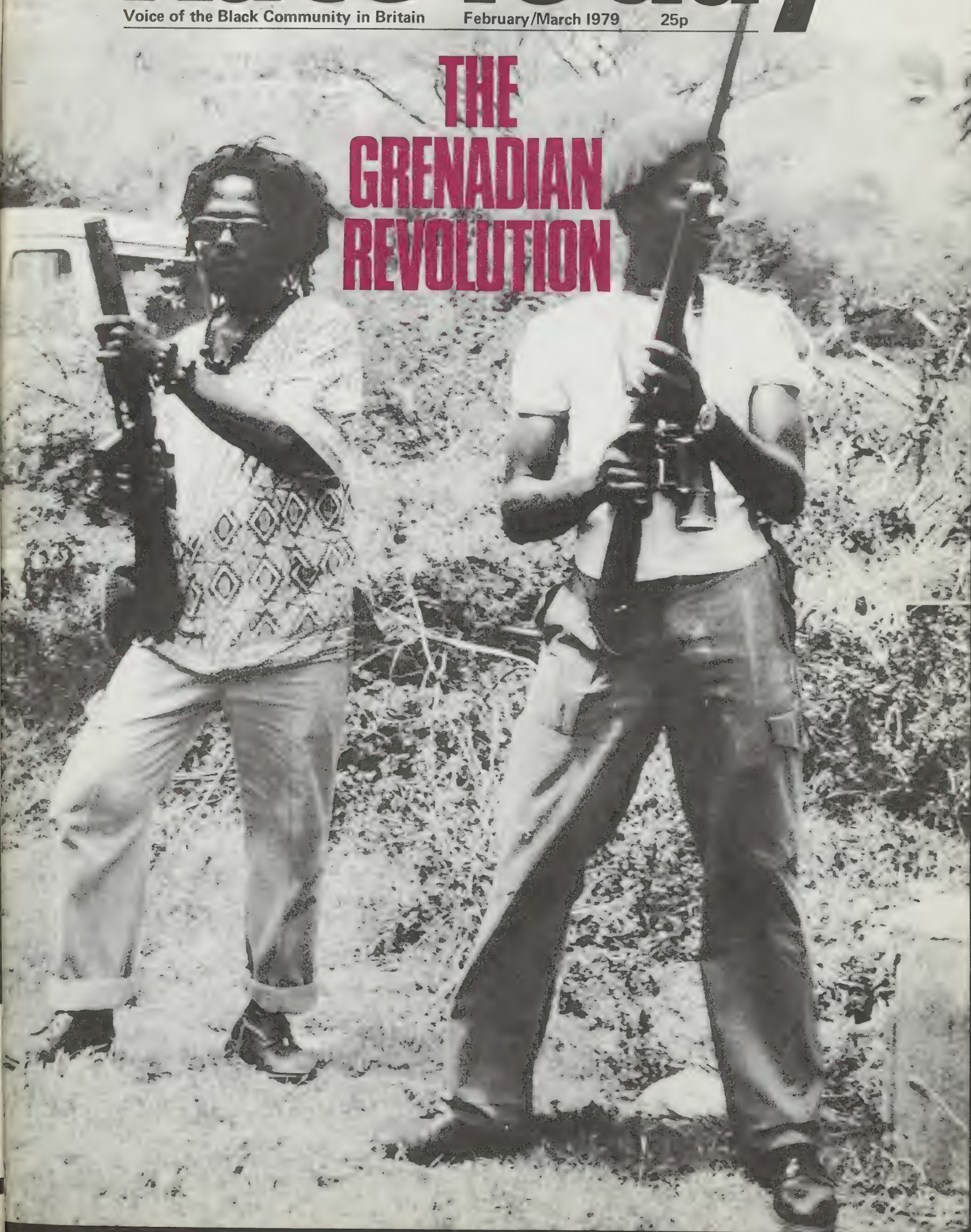
Race Today

Voice of the Black Community in Britain

February/March 1979

25p

THE GRENADIAN REVOLUTION



LETTERS

PPP Replies

Dear Race Today,

We have just seen a copy of your publication of September/October 1978 and the [report on Guyana. We would like to correct one point in which it was stated that the People's Progressive Party has 'despite its opposition to referendum continued to participate in the rigged Constituent Assembly and will, presumably, submit its views concerning a new constitution.'

This is not true. The PPP has boycotted the Constituent Assembly and will not participate in any way.

It may be of interest to your readers to know that the PNC government used the referendum as a means of postponing elections for 15 months (elections were due in July 1978) on the pretext of the urgency to write a new constitution. The phoney Constituent Assembly has not yet started to discuss the constitutional question, eight months after its formation.

Yours sincerely,
Janet Jagan, PPP, Guyana

Censorship

Dear Race Today,

I work on a monthly Birmingham community paper called 'Broadside'.

Last year, we published an article on the property speculation of the companies of which a local council leader, Neville Bosworth, was a director.

Subsequently, we were issued with a writ for libel, unless we issued him an apology. We refused to do this and consequently began to raise money for our defence fund by putting on local benefits.

In February of this year, we decided to put on the film, "Dread Beat an' Blood", featuring Linton Kwesi Johnson. We decided to apply for the use of The Gala, a city centre cinema.

The manager of the cinema agreed to the venture and thought that it would be successful, as the Gala was already known by the local black community for its late night Kung Fu films. He suggested that I ask the Arts Council, the distributors of the film, to apply for permission for the late night Saturday showing. The Arts Council complied. Then, the Gala manager told us that the film would not be able to be shown as it didn't have a certificate. Immediately, we contacted the Arts Council and were informed that, in fact, it had just been issued with a certificate; but that in consultation with the Birmingham licensing authorities they had used the 'excuse' that a late night Saturday showing would attract the Rastafarian element or even might be an incitement to riot.

This kind of discrimination we find despicable and, bound to aggravate local race relations. It is even more pathetic seeing that black youth already attend the Gala on Friday nights for Kung Fu films with little or no trouble.

Yours sincerely,
Andrew Burchell,
Broadside Newspaper, Birmingham.

THANKS

The Bradford Black and Race Today Collectives wish to thank all the artists and other folk who contributed to the successful fund raising at the Belle Vue, Manchester on Friday, February 24, 1979.

GEORGE LINDO

As we go to press, information is at hand that George Lindo has been released on unconditional bail.

Following a Home Office investigation into the activities of D C Brearley, one of the major witnesses in the Lindo trial, it has been discovered that the police officer was responsible for improperly obtaining statements from defendants. He has been forced to resign.

Lindo has always contended that his statement was improperly obtained by officers, Brearley, Jackson, and Craven. Lindo was released by the Appeal Court on unconditional bail on March 15 after the Director of Public Prosecutions had requested of Lindo's solicitors that an application for bail be placed before the Appeal Court on Lindo's behalf. The appeal will be heard in a few weeks.

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GRENADA: EVERY COOK CAN AND MUST GOVERN

In one sharp thrust, the people of Grenada have completed the first stage of the revolutionary movement which raised its head in that island state in the early months of 1974.

The historic seizure of power, which took place on the morning of March 13, 1979, was effected largely by the unemployed youth section of the Grenadian working class. It could have taken place in anyone of the Caribbean islands.

The basis for this remarkable development in Caribbean politics and social life has been laid in the last twenty five years. In this period, Caribbean societies have been dragged hot-house fashion, directly into the orbit of modern capitalist economy. Millions of dollars worth of foreign capital have poured into these islands, disrupting old colonial patterns, transforming whole landscapes, uprooting small peasants, concentrating in urban centres an army of unemployed, increasing the exploitation, degradation and misery of the working class and disgoring large numbers of the native population into the cities of North America and Europe.

At the heart of this transformation is and has been the unceasing and endless rebellion of Caribbean workers, peasants, the unemployed, schoolchildren and housewives. Not one single island has been unaffected by this process.

It was in 1968 that we experienced the first dramatic challenge to a modern Caribbean regime. Then, the people of Jamaica took to the streets, ostensibly to protest the banning of historian, Walter Rodney. Shortly to follow were the people of Trinidad and Tobago, whose thorough-going rebellion all but toppled the Williams regime. Reminiscent of Hurricane Flora, challenges were mounted against the regimes in St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Dominica, Anguilla, Antigua, Guyana, St. Kitts and Jamaica, including the emergence of armed guerilla struggle in the post 1970 period in Trinidad and Tobago.

These governments, without a single exception, face these insurrectionary movements with massive repression and state brutality. This overwhelming tendency is best described by the former Prime Minister of Grenada, Sir Eric Gairy: "In the last twenty-four years people have tried to get rid of me, but lots of them, that have tried, are lying in the cemetery."

Let us be in no doubt that such repression, as has been unleashed on this broad anti-colonial movement, has had the backing and support of the imperialists in Britain and the United States, strengthened by Latin American reactionary forces.

American gun boats and the Venezuelan military intimidated the revolutionary forces in Trinidad and Tobago into surrendering in 1970.

The Chilean government, the most brutal of Latin American regimes, provided training, arms and ammunition for Grenada's fascist dictatorship. The disruption and division of the rebellious working classes in Jamaica has been orchestrated from Washington.

Therein lies the counter-revolutionary power which is bound to raise its head in opposition to the Grenadian revolution. In fact, these forces have been present since the emergence of a massive movement to rid the country of what is popularly known as Gairyism.

In 1974, while Britain was still the colonial power, a general strike had paralysed the island after Gairy had unleashed a gang of thugs, the Mongoose Gang, against elements who were opposed to him. The British responded by dispatching frigates to the Caribbean. In the midst of this thorough rejection of the regime, the British government granted Gairy independence, funds for development and dignified this self-proclaimed crook with the title, Sir. It was a clear attempt to give legitimacy to one of the Caribbean's most corrupt and brutal regimes.

The fact that the British and American governments have not promptly dispatched troops to rescue Gairyism owes little to charity. It is the determined, systematic and courageous opposition of the Grenadian people, supported by Caribbeans at home and abroad, and led by a skilful political leadership which has succeeded in isolating Gairyism beyond recall.

Short of rescuing Gairyism, the imperialists are determined to undermine the Grenadian revolution with the assistance of Caribbean governments.

Why else are these governments vacillating in their recognition of the Peoples Revolutionary Government of Grenada? Why else are they putting pressure on the Grenadian government to return to constitutionality as a quid pro quo for diplomatic recognition?

There was no such hesitancy and vacillation in recognising the regime of that 'Butcher', Idi Amin.

What therefore has to be done to protect the Grenadian revolution from imperialist interference, both overt and covert? Firstly, we begin, as we must, with the people of Grenada. The most thorough-going democratic state must at once replace the old colonial state machinery as a means through which the people of Grenada are to be mobilised. This is a pre-condition for the transformation of colonial production relations which have kept Caribbean peoples as hewers of wood and drawers of water. And we have no objection, none whatever, to a new state organised around Assemblies of the people and the National Assembly which the new Grenadian Prime Minister, Maurice Bishop, described to us in the May 1974 issue of 'Race Today' and which we re-print in the present issue.

It is this bold and revolutionary move forward that can and will galvanise Caribbean peoples throughout the world, in support of the Grenadian revolution and, through us, sections of the international working class with whom we have been socialised.

Every cook can and must govern.

Race Today Collective Feb/March 1979

PARENTS SIDE WITH STRIKING WORKERS

School caretakers employed by the local council in Haringey are on strike for an increase in wages beyond the 5%/£3.50 limit set by the Labour government.

As a consequence, schools in Haringey remain closed.

The 'Sunday Telegraph' of February 11 1979, made great play of the fact that parents in Haringey are demanding that schools be reopened. They certainly are not representative of all parents in Haringey.

An organisation of Black parents, the Black Parents Movement, wrote to the

local trade union branches expressing their support for the strike with a proposal of how parents in Haringey could be mobilised in support.

We of the Black Parents Movement wish to support, publicly and without reservation, your strike and your general struggle against low wages. We are fully committed to the efforts you are now making. We think the Government's limit of 5%, and then Callaghan's last minute offer of £3.50, are an insult — considering the long hours which caretakers in particular

and other low paid workers have to work to earn a reasonable living.

We are fully aware that many black workers are also low paid workers who hold jobs as porters, caretakers, cleaners, hospital workers, railway, post office and garment workers and they too are struggling for higher wages against the whole bevy of employers, hostile Government ministers and M.P.s (government and opposition), the press, radio and television to defend the right to strike, and to maintain their living standards against the heavy rise in prices.

The moral pressure to weaken the workers' resolve is intense. If we were to believe John Methuen of the CBI, and the representatives of the food manufacturers and distributors, we should all be starving by now because lorry drivers asked for a well-deserved rise in their pay.

We believe that no worker should have to work long hours of overtime in order to earn a decent wage. We support your demand for £60.00 per week.

LINDO WINS LEAVE TO APPEAL

The 18 month long campaign to free George Lindo from prison has reached a new stage. On January 18, after twelve months of prevaricating and pussy-footing by the Court of Appeal in London, he has finally won leave to appeal against his conviction and two-year sentence for armed robbery.

George Lindo, a young Jamaican, living and working in Bradford, was framed by three Bradford police officers — Det. Constable Jackson, Police Constable Brierley and Det. Sgt. Craven — in August '77. They had no evidence linking him to the crime other than their own conspiracy of lies and a so-called 'confession'.

Immediately, his family and other Bradford blacks rallied to his side and, with the assistance of Bradford Black and Race Today activists, formed the George Lindo Action Committee. This body has waged a political campaign aimed at mobilising blacks throughout Britain to join in its demands:

That George Lindo be immediately released from prison.

That George Lindo's conviction be quashed.

That police officers Jackson, Brierley and Craven be dismissed from the Bradford police force.

That the Bradford police stop their harassment and framings of blacks.

That a minimum of three black jurors sit at trials of black defendants.

What follows is an account of how the present stage in the campaign was reached.

George Lindo's application for bail and for leave to appeal was heard before a single Judge at the Appeal Court. Leaping this hurdle is a pre-requisite in the British legal process for getting a case reheard in full court. The single judge has the power to make or break a convicted person's chances of an appeal.

Since his conviction, the onus has been on George to provide evidence that

Brierley, Craven and Jackson lied at his trial. Such evidence was found in an identical case which was exposed in the press. The case concerned a young man named Geoffrey Elliot. He was arrested in January '77 and held in custody at the Tyrls police station, the same one George was taken to. While in custody, he confessed to committing a rape. Party to getting the confession was none other than Detective Sergeant Craven. On February 17, however, two days after George was sentenced to two years imprisonment, Mr. Elliot was formally cleared of the rape charge after another man confessed to the offence.

On the strength of this, and the fact that the Home Office was forced by the Elliot scandal to order an enquiry, George made an immediate application for bail pending his appeal. His case was that the information about Craven's corruption was not available at the time of his trial. The application was refused and he was directed to await the outcome of the Elliot inquiry and take the matter to the single judge.

The inquiry into Elliot's case was completed as long ago as May last year and a report was sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions. There it was sat on and suppressed. Repeated requests by George's solicitors for the legal papers on the Elliot case and for the report have been denied. The Registrar at the Court of Appeal insisted that he could not fix a date for a hearing before the single judge without the result of the Elliot enquiry. It was a typical Catch 22 situation, with George in the middle as victim.

At the hearing on January 18, George

The Government is trying to con us into believing that a percentage rise in wages leads to a similar percentage rise in inflation and thereby wish to try to pressure us into accepting low living standards — one of the lowest in Europe — for some mythical national interest. What nation? Whose interest?

Is the kind of board chairman who earns £27,000 per year and is at the same time receiving such perks as a car, shirt and other allowances, plus entertainment, paid vacation, index-linked pension, company yachts acting in the national interest?

And why should the caretaker then be against the national interest because he earns without overtime £42.00 per week (without London allowance) for an extraordinarily long day and wants to earn instead £60.00 per week?

Although the strike in Haringey is causing inconvenience to parents, the Black Parents Movement, as one group of parents in Haringey and in England, unreservedly supports your struggle.

However, the Black Parents Movement thinks that it is a mistake for National Union of Public Employees and General Municipal Workers school caretakers not to take the parents into your confidence. We feel it would have been better if NUPE's and MGWU's case, which we support, had been explained in a leaflet addressed to the parents through their children at school. And it would have been important if secondary school children in particular had been informed by caretakers and others in NUPE and MGWU in an effort to win their solidarity.

In addition to this letter, the Black Parents Movement will be issuing public statements about why we support the caretakers and other NUPE and MGWU workers. With solidarity from parents and students and some teachers and other sections of these communities, we hope and believe that your victory will be certain.

Enclosed is an initial donation of £10.00 for your strike fund. We shall try to collect more for your strike fund as the struggle continues.

Black Parents Movement
30 January 1979

was represented by Stuart Shields, Q.C. He was not allowed to be present. Neither were his family, friends and supporters, who mounted a demonstration outside the court. The barrister argued to the Judge, Sir John Raymond Williams, the fact that, at the time of George's trial, the defence did not have the benefit of the evidence in the Elliot case and, therefore, was unable to discredit Craven's evidence or cross-examine him about it. He also told him that, without the Elliot evidence, George's case for a successful appeal was considerably weakened. He asked the judge to order the release of the papers.

The view of the judge was that it was clearly a matter of justice that the defence should have the Elliot papers. He also took the unusual step of asking if George would wish his complaint against P.C. Brierley to be investigated before the case was heard by the Court of Appeal. The usual practice is for complaints against the police to be investigated after a court case.

Sir John Raymond Williams, also in granting George leave to appeal his case, not only commented that it is a "disquieting" case, he also directed that George's solicitors should have access to documents in the Elliot case. Legal aid was also granted.

The way is now open for the appeal to be heard and the corrupt practices of the Bradford police to be exposed. There should be no further delays. George Lindo is innocent and he should be immediately released and given compensation for the humiliating experience he has been forced to suffer.



RAILTON BELONGS TO US

The Railton Youth Club in Brixton faces closure as a result of the actions of its financiers, the Inner London Education Authority and its landlords, the Methodist Church Council.

Young black members of the club have responded by occupying the premises and mobilising the support of blacks and whites throughout the country.

Below, we print a statement issued by

the Railton Youth Action Committee, the organisation which is in the leadership of the struggle.

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Young black members of the club have responded by occupying the premises and mobilising the support of blacks and whites throughout the country.

Below, we print a statement issued by the Railton Youth Action Committee, the organisation which is in the leadership of the struggle.

The Railton Youth Club, popularly known as Sheppards', has been in existence since 1964. The membership of the club is 100% black and we are housed in premises owned by the local Methodist Church.

On February 8 the Methodist Church Council, with no prior warning and no consultation, suspended the activities of the club. Accompanied by two policemen, the local vicar, Graham Kent, changed the lock on the door of the Railton Community Centre which houses the Youth Club, thereby locking out both the workers and the membership.

At the same time, the Inner London Education Authority, which finances the club in part, suspended Ivan Madray, the senior youth worker, and offered the other full and part time workers jobs elsewhere.

We know that both the Methodist Church and ILEA have a policy of closing down black youth clubs and see the attack on our youth centre as another example of the implementation of that policy.

It was a well prepared, clandestine and vicious attack on a black institution which caters for the needs of some 500 youths. The local vicar even went around to local shop keepers urging them to board up their windows because, he said, young blacks would be rioting in the streets of Brixton as a result of his actions. No doubt he similarly prepared the local riot police.

However, the vicar was denied his prediction. In place of the riot we, the membership, have formed ourselves into the Railton Youth Club Action Committee to fight the white colonial practices of the ILEA and the Methodist Church Council. We have occupied the club and activities are continuing as normal. Our demands are as follows:

1. Immediate reinstatement of Ivan Madray
2. Immediate revocation of decision to disperse staff
3. That an ad hoc committee with representatives from membership and the church council be set up to formulate proposals for a new constitution.

We have received a wide range of support from organisations and individuals, black and white, for our demands. We mobilised our support at a mass rally held on Monday 12 February at the Railton Community Centre. Leading black artists — Merger, Rico, Linton K Johnson, Accabre Huntley offered their services free of charge for the cultural section of the rally.

For further information, contact Railton Youth Action Committee, Railton Community Centre, Railton Road, London S.E.24. Tel 01-274 0514 or Tel 01-737 2268



Lorine Burt

Julian Stapleton

FASCISM IN THE CARIBBEAN The Grenada model

The seizure of power by the New Jewel Movement, on March 13, 1979, in the island state of Grenada, represents, among other things, a victory over the emerging fascist forces in the political culture of the region.

Maurice Bishop, Prime Minister of Grenada and leader of the New Jewel Movement, had been campaigning throughout the Caribbean, in the last six years, against the rise of fascism in Grenada.

In October 1975, Bishop addressed a seminar convened by the Oilfield Workers Trade Union in Trinidad on the topic — Fascism, A Caribbean Reality? Here we print extracts from Bishop's address.

What I propose to do is to look at Grenada in terms of the various faces [of fascism] that we have spoken about. Let us try to see how many of these faces of fascism are present in Grenada. First of all, look at the question of absolutist rule. Look at the question of the maximum leader. There is no more maximum leader in the Caribbean than Eric Matthew Gairy. Perhaps not even Baby Doc can surpass him.

We must see this both in terms of what he says of himself and more crucially in terms of how his supporters see him. So that for example, no cabinet decisions of any kind, and I mean any kind, can be made if Gairy is out of the island. He is president for life of the largest trade union in the island, he is also president for life of the ruling political party, and he aspires to be Prime Minister for life, or maybe later, President for life of the country.

The evidence in Grenada, with respect to totalitarian rule, extends to all aspects of human relations. It is true of the politics, it is also true of the unions. Gairy has been maintaining a very consistent policy, which has been stepped up from 1973, of trying to take away the membership of the other key unions on the island.

There are some sixteen registered trade unions in Grenada, but only about five are worth talking about and Gairy has been trying to poach workers from these from about 1973 onwards, particularly from the Technical and Allied Workers Union. In fact, there was a strike called by Technical and Allied in May 1973 which had nothing whatsoever to do with the question of workmen's wages, nothing to do with



Peoples Liberation Army, Grenada taken by Angus Thompson

the question of better conditions, but was called solely for the purpose of reminding Gairy that the union still had the ability to turn the lights off and to remind him not to poach. The strike in fact was engineered by one of Gairy's right hand men, a minister in the government, who was then also legal adviser to the union and president of the Trade Union Congress.

Now, this year, there have already been four different but related efforts by Gairy to further control the activities of Trade Unions. Sometime in February this year, Cable and Wireless began the building of a micro-wave station and about two months after the project was underway, the workers asked the Technical and Allied Workers' Union to organise them. But a few days after the president of the Technical and Allied Workers' Union had enlisted the workers, Gairy arrived on the scene.

Driven to the scene by the foreign manager of Cable and Wireless, Gairy told these workers that he alone had the right to organise workers employed in any public capacity in Grenada. Nobody else had that right, he insisted, as he had been given that right since 1961, although he didn't say who gave him that right. And therefore all these workers were going to have to join his union or they were going to find themselves without a job. The workers, almost to a man, resisted but he nonetheless got the manager to arrange for each of them to get a dollar a day extra.

At the end of the week virtually all the workers on that project refused the increase and were showing the greatest solidarity with the union. But do you know what that union did eventually? The union turned around and agreed with the Gairy proposal that the question of recognition be submitted to the Trade Union Congress. That was the reaction. And predictably, the Trade Union Congress said: Gairy's union is in charge. The actual agreement reached was a compromise allowing for the joint recognition of both unions with union dues being paid to the TUC. I need hardly say, however, that in this situation the Gairy union soon won out.

The situation at home is complicated by the fact that we don't have the kind of militants among trade union leaders that Trinidadians have. There is, for example, no George Weekes, and that makes a fundamental difference. At home, to give one example, the unions apparently are only now hearing about a Cost of Living Allowance, and are only now, in a few cases, beginning to negotiate for that. And when they ask for an increase in wages they don't ask for 147 per cent, they ask for 30 or 35 per cent hoping to get 15 or 10. So, I mean it's that level of union organisation and backwardness we are dealing with.

There is a place in Grenada called the Grenada Yacht Services — a marina for foreigners with all their nice yachts and so on — and there are some workers there whom Gairy tried to organise but the workers refused to join his union. The result was that he had a number of them sacked with the collusion of the management.

Then there is the situation with the Nutmeg

Association workers. The Nutmeg Association in Grenada is, after the government, the single largest employer of workers on the island. As you may well know, nutmeg is the most important industry in Grenada, and Grenada produces the world's second largest amount of nutmegs. Only Indonesia produces more than we do.

Now, there are three large processing stations on the island, and something like 18 receiving stations and these workers were unionised by the Commercial and Industrial Workers' Union. But in July, Gairy acquired the Nutmeg Association and one of his first acts was to replace many of the unionised workers by his own workers. So that through this mechanism of control, workers are constantly being divided, they are unable to see any dynamism or militancy in the leadership of the other unions and in concrete terms they recognise that whenever Gairy wishes to move to victimise them he can do so with impunity. It means that the spirit of these workers is being dampened and stifled. And this kind of worker can very easily become de-classed and fall prey to the lure of fascists or neo-fascists.

Now, all of you have heard about Parliament in Grenada — a fiasco and a farce. There are 15 seats, 14 are held by Gairy, one by the opposition GNP. In the last elections in 1972 the GULP claimed 58 per cent of the votes and gave the opposition 42. Now, how 48 and 42 works out to be 14 to one is a matter, I suppose, for mathematical geniuses. But in any event that is the reality.

The radio is another good example. There is one radio station that is totally controlled by the government and only their voices can be heard. In fact, in a speech last year, after we began agitating for radio time, Gairy said that for the NJM to ask for radio time was the same like his asking us to be allowed to write an article for our newspaper. So, as far as he is concerned, the radio is his personal property.

Regarding newspapers, well, of course, you have heard of the Newspaper Law, which I will deal with a little later on.

Outlaw & disorder

Let me come to the question of the legal and constitutional face [of fascism] Grenada is also well-known for its repressive laws. All the usual ones like State of Emergency Acts, Public Order Acts, Explosives Acts and various such devices that Comrades here are very familiar with, we also have in abundance in Grenada.

We have, in addition, something which was passed last year which was called Shops-Regulations of Opening Hours-Act. Now, that was designed to make sure that all shops kept their doors open. Remem-

ber last year there was a general shutdown and business places had closed down. So what Gairy did was to pass this Act demanding that business places stay open. This year, following on the footsteps of Antigua, and after the Privy Council had given its very famous pro-establishment judgement, Gairy passed an Amendment to the Newspaper Act. Now in Antigua they were asking for ten thousand dollars so he decided that he wanted sixty thousand; he wanted six times more. Grenada of course is richer and independent to boot, so we must demand more. This sum was eventually reduced to twenty thousand. And therefore to legally print a newspaper in Grenada now, you have to put up twenty thousand dollars; additionally you have to sign a bond; and also you have to pay an annual license fee of five hundred dollars. This law had the effect of closing down the other opposition papers. The GNP's newspaper was closed, another group called the UPP also stopped printing and 'The Torchlight' likewise stopped publishing until they were able to comply with the law. Only our newspaper continued, and still continues, to publish the facts.

They have just passed a very interesting law, a law which on its face might not appear to be dangerous. This is an amendment to the Jury Act. And what they have done by this law is to disallow jurors from sitting in any civil cases. That might look simple enough, it might look harmless enough. It is very far from that. What this jury law is designed to do is to make sure that in libel cases no jury sits. The background is that Gairy has a world record in the bringing of libel cases. Up to 1972, Gairy had brought no fewer than eight libel cases. And he has had about five brought against him. He is a man who likes the court. He has had something like twenty-two different debt cases taken against him. And one of the things he likes to boast about is that in one year he was charged some thirty-five times for road traffic and other offences. That is one of his smaller pleasures.

What this particular law is designed to do is to ensure that in libel cases there will be no jury sitting to determine the facts and come to a conclusion. You are going to have to deal with a judge alone who will have to be judge of law and facts. This law, in fact, seems to have been timed to prevent a jury from hearing a libel case, adjourned last week, which Gairy had taken against Michael Sylvester, a lawyer and former opposition politician. That gives you an idea of what I mean when I say this law is not nearly as harmless as it might appear.

Now, moving very quickly to the question of the judiciary — the judicial face. We have a situation at home where there is virtually no magistracy. The magistrates are almost totally non-functioning in the sense that questions of law are of no concern to the majority of them.

Many of you remember November 18, 1973, what we call 'Bloody Sunday', when six of us were beaten by Gairy's Secret Police in Grenville, where we were going to attend a meeting. Well, they kept us in the cell, bleeding, bottle-trimmed and in despe-

rate need of medical attention that night, and the next morning we appeared handcuffed and barefooted before the magistrate, a man called I.I. Duncan, and were charged with being in possession of arms and ammunition.

Now, the law says that where persons are charged with summary offences bail must be granted, but Duncan stated that as far as he was concerned, no law could take away his discretion, he did not care what the law said; he was granting no bail. That is the magistracy. When we talk about magistrates who do not even pretend that there is something called 'law' which they must try to serve and uphold, you must come to Grenada to understand. It is nothing short of a comic pantomime going on in most of the courts today.

So far as the judge (there is only one in Grenada) is concerned, elements in the government had been expressing open hostility to the judge who used to be there up to a couple of weeks ago. He had given a number of decisions against the government which they were not happy about, and they have been applying all sorts of pressure to have him removed. In fact, this month he was removed, transferred to Antigua and a new judge has arrived. As I said before, judges must be judged more in terms of their class outlook rather than their personal integrity, though integrity is always an important consideration.

Police & military power

Next, the military side of fascism — the military face. Since 1967, when the GULP got back into office, there have been no less than ten different Commissioners of Police. Some years we might have two, other years only one and so on. Ten different Commissioners of Police in eight years! From 1954 to 1967 there was only one Commissioner; he somehow or the other managed to last thirteen years but once Gairy resumed office the new pattern took shape. And the vast majority of these Commissioners have been foreigners. Quite obviously, when you bring a foreigner in as Commissioner he has no loyalty to the country, no responsibility to the people, so he either does what he is told or he goes and for that very reason he is a lot easier to control and to remove when he becomes too "manish". So over the years they have just been chopping and changing Commissioners with the regularity of the seasons.

Right now the Commissioner of Police is from Nigeria; he has been there with a Deputy Commissioner, also from Nigeria, for the last three months.

This seems to have been the result of some arrangement worked out by Gairy with General Gowon before he was overthrown sometime last year. Gairy had gone to the Pan-African Congress in Tanzania, which again is quite an amazing thing when you think about it — imagine Gairy as a Pan-Africanist, and all dressed in white. And coming back from the Pan-African Congress, he stopped off in Nigeria to beg a return passage home and to work up this deal with Gowon. A safe prediction is that our Nigerian brothers are very unlikely to last the duration of their 2 year contract.

Now, beyond that, there is the question of constant victimisation and promotions based on patronage and for 'brutality services' rendered. A police force in fact, which the Duffus Commission of Enquiry, held last year into the events in Grenada, found to be entirely lacking in morals and discipline. This was the finding of that Commission of Enquiry. Along with the police force, there had been up to 1974 the secret police and the infamous mongoose gang.

Now, as long ago as May 1970, in a very famous speech entitled 'Address on Black Power', the same speech that Comrade Belgrave was referring to when he said "If yuh neighbour's house on fire wet yours", Gairy claimed in effect that there were two Erics in the Caribbean, a fast one and a slow one, and he was not the slow one. Yes, in that speech in May 1970, he announced that he was going to recruit "the roughest and toughest rough-necks" he could find — that's the exact quotation — in order to meet steel with steel. And he also promised to create what he called 'Voluntary Intelligence Units for the Protection of Property'. And this, according to him, was to come from the propertied and monied classes, people who were going to come forward to protect their interests from the spectre of Black Power.

Now, since May 1970 he has created in fact a Night Ambush Squad, a Special Secret Police Squad, then he formed what he called Police Aides and finally they formed what they called Volunteers for the Protection of Human Rights. As you recognise, this is similar language to Mussolini and Hitler. They are saying that these Volunteers for the Protection of Human Rights, all two thousand of them during their hey day, were volunteering only to protect the human rights of the government and the human rights of supporters of the government. And in fact, their methods of attack were nine out of ten times designed to make an impact. It was not a question of catching you in the dark and beating you; these beatings had to take place in public, in the full view of everybody. Obviously, they were trying to tell Grenadians something about their future. They were not hiding, it was open, it was public, it was brutal.

And even up to two or three months ago, on July 18, one of our comrades, Kenrick Radix, was beaten and chopped up in the middle of St George's. Yes, two or three months ago, by some of these same people who are now posing as members of a Defence Force. They are once more preparing for war.

And when you talk about a Defence Force in Grenada, you are not talking about a Defence Force

like you have in Trinidad where, at least, so far as the law books are concerned, it is legal. In Grenada, that Defence Force has no legality whatsoever. Our laws provide for a Grenada Volunteer Constabulary and for Rural Constables. But there is no provision under the law for this Defence Force, so like the Secret Police it is again an entirely illegal creation that operates illegally but has the full force, backing an effect of the 'law'.

Now, this Defence Force continues to be comprised of criminal elements. In fact, one of the things that the Commission of Enquiry found is that no less than sixty four members of the so called 'Police Aides' had criminal records. Some of them had as many as 34 previous convictions. And many of these same people are now in this Defence Force. So when we are talking about legality and illegality we must understand that no real attempts are made to disguise, to clothe or to hide institutional illegality and brutality in Grenada.

Who owns what

Let us move on Comrades, to the economic face of fascism as it appears in Grenada. Now, Grenada is no different to the rest of the Caribbean, except Cuba. Like the rest of the Caribbean, the controlling class has struck an alliance with would-be local capitalists and local compradors. Opposite to that class there is of course the broad base of workers — the working class. Here you find that unemployment in Grenada today is something like 50 percent of the work force. If you add underemployment to that, the figure would probably pass 65%. Even official documents in 1970, when it was supposed to have been a boom year because of tourism and a great deal of construction activity, put open unemployment at 17 percent. The Government, of course, hides behind what they call "the crisis" of 1973 and 1974.

They are unable to do anything about unemployment, so they have been saying that 'Jewel' created the crisis and therefore 'Jewel' must solve the unemployment problem. And 'Jewel' is not even in office yet!

If we look at the class structure, what we find is that the producing class of wage-labourers, people engaged in agriculture, in the few factories that we have, in manufacturing and so on, these people are doomed to a life of social misery, degradation and exploitation. The few parasites at the top of course live in great luxury. In between these two come the middle strata. As with the rest of the Caribbean, they have one main social function, and that is to provide the supportive machinery for the state, the international bourgeoisie and the local compradors and capitalists. Their main function is to consume and that is what they are doing. But in addition to consuming

they provide the apparatus of control for the ruling class.

Now, there are exceptions to this within the middle strata. There are, in the Grenada situation, many elements of that middle strata that can be neutralised and there are certainly elements of the middle class who are, quite frankly, as fed up with capitalism as the working class. In other words, they can be won over to the working class. And efforts, in our view, have to be made to do precisely this.

When we look at the question of foreign control of the economy, what we find at home is that the multi-national corporations dominate and control the areas of banking, insurance companies and tourism. There are 5 international banks operating there. There are no fewer than 66 registered insurance companies in Grenada — sixty-six! But yet they tell us that we are poor, small, worth nothing, and without money and all that. And yet they have sixty-six of those companies in Grenada. What are they doing there?

In the hotel business, of the fifteen or so hotels, one of them, Holiday Inn, alone controls sixty per cent of the total bed space available. In agriculture, there is a monopoly by Geest of our bananas. With cocoa and nutmegs, we ship these raw crops up to England where they are processed, packed into tins and shipped back to us. We are not engaged in any form of agro-industrialisation.

When our cocoa farmer picks his cocoa pod off the cocoa tree, he has to sell it to the Cocoa Association which in turn sells to agents in England. These agents then sell to manufacturers who package or tin the cocoa, call it Ovaltine or Chocolate or Cadburys or Fry's or Milo or whatever and return it to be bought

at five or six dollars a tin. A straight case of dependent economy — an economy totally controlled by outside forces.

The few compradors (if we can so call them) we have at home do not even understand the basics of capitalism. They seem incapable of understanding that with a little money, a little organisation and a few ideas money can be channelled in agro-industry. They seem totally barren of ideas and are mainly concerned to break off ninety-five cents profit or a dollar profit or whatever they can get on a tin of corned beef or a pound of saltfish, put that in their pockets and then call themselves "big capitalist". But perhaps it is as well that they do not understand!

Comrades, from all of this we can conclude that neo-fascism is fairly well entrenched in Grenada. Entrenched, not in the sense that people are consciously and publicly and actively articulating a philosophy of fascism, that is to say, they are not saying they are fascist, but what they are doing tells us that they are fascist or neo-fascist in outlook. And this in reality is the only way to assess and judge fascists and fascism.

It does not matter what comes out of the mouths of politicians, it is a question of what they do in practice. It is what their social practice is, that will determine whether objectively they are or are not fascists, regardless of whether they believe subjectively that they are the greatest democrats since Locke or Rousseau. And this, Comrades is the situation in Grenada in terms of fascism.



Peoples Liberation Army, Grenada taken by Angus Thompson

WHAT WE SAY

The Alliance of the Black Parents Movement, the Black Youth Movement, Race Today Collective and Bradford Black Collective, published the following statement in response to events in Grenada.

The New Jewel Movement, led by Maurice Bishop, has today, March 13, 1979, seized power from one of the most corrupt and repressive governments in the Caribbean.

The movement against this regime emerged at a high point on January 21, 1974. Public meetings of thousands of people and, what was in effect, a general strike, represented the mass opposition to the Gairy regime. Within that struggle, the New Jewel Movement quite successfully organised institutions of popular power, culminating in a Constituent Assembly. These organisations of the people experienced a set back in the only way that they could have. Eric Gairy unleashed his Mongoose Gang of murderers, and thugs on them. Innocent Belmar, then an assistant Chief of Police, was the leader of the Mongoose Gang.

The situation became so critical that the Caribbean Conference of Churches intervened in the Grenada crisis. They appointed a commission of enquiry (headed by Judge Duffus of Jamaica), which confirmed the corrupt practices of Gairy and his party. With his increasing isolation, Gairy turned for military and economic support to the most hated government of the American continent — the Pinochet regime in Chile. Gairy also turned to Mafia elements in the US.

By December 1976, GULP (the Grenada United Labour Party), under Gairy's leadership, had to face the electorate to ratify the policies he was pursuing. NJM formed an alliance with reactionary elements, with whom they would not normally have associated, in order to contain Gairy's fascist policies. In the elections, the Alliance, in which NJM was the leading group, won six seats. Gairy won nine. Of these nine seats, three were contested because Gairy had breached the electoral principles. Those seats were 'won' with small majorities.

Since then the NJM has used its parliamentary status to campaign on behalf of the independent struggles of workers and peasants. The latest of these has been the struggle by workers of Barclays Bank in Grenada to win recognition for their union, increased wages and better working conditions. The Gairy regime

made the full machinery of his repressive state available to Barclay's management to defeat the struggle of the bank workers.

It is perhaps this struggle which placed the final nail in Gairy's coffin. It was the last straw to break the camel's back.

The campaign, led by the NJM, could find little parliamentary expression because Gairy refused to adhere to normal parliamentary practice. That gave the NJM, with its popular base and popular support, the moral authority to seize power on March 13 1979.

It is this movement, the New Jewel Movement, whose history is known to us that we — the members of the Black Parents Movement, the Black Youth Movement, the Race Today Collective and the Bradford Black Collective — support.

What has been Gairy's response to the victory of the New Jewel Movement? He has called for ammunition and troops from the United States and Britain to assist him in attacking the revolutionary forces, thereby spilling more blood than he already has done in Grenada social life and politics. He has gone on record as saying "the last 24 years people have tried to get rid of me, but lots of them, that have tried, are lying in the cemetery".

The Black Parents Movement, the Black Youth Movement, the Race Today Collective and the Bradford Black Collective demand:

1. No foreign intervention in Grenada.
2. The British, American and Venezuelan governments must not interfere as they did in Trinidad and Tobago in 1970.
3. Immediate recognition by all Caribbean governments of the new Grenada government, led by Prime Minister Maurice Bishop.
4. Immediate recognition by the British and American governments.

Victory to the New Jewel Movement!

Victory to the Caribbean peoples!

Power to the workers and peasants in Grenada!

What you can do:

The BPM, the BYM the Race Today Collective and the Bradford Black Collective have sent telegrams to Prime Minister Callaghan, to the US Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, and to Caribbean organisations outlining our demands.

We urge you to send telegrams and letters containing the demands we have outlined.

Please send copies to:

The Black Parents Movement,
57 Victoria Road,
London N4 3SN.



Maurice Bishop Prime Minister of Grenada



GOVERNMENT BY POPULAR POWER

In the May 1974 issue of 'Race Today', Maurice Bishop, then a member of the New Jewel Movement, now Prime Minister of the Revolutionary Government of Grenada, described, in a interview, the origins of the New Jewel Movement and its perspectives for a new Grenadian society.

It is much more relevant now than it was in May 1974.

Could you begin with the origins of the New Jewel Movement.

NJM is a combination of two separate organisations. The first is Jewel which stands for Joint Endeavour for Welfare, Education and Liberation. That was started in March 1972, one month after the last general elections, pretty much because people were dissatisfied with the results of the election and wanted to begin to search for new political forms and begin to experiment with new ways of dealing with the situation. Eunison Whiteman (who ran in the 1972 election as a candidate for Herbert Blaize's Opposition Grenada National Party) was the principal figure in starting Jewel.

Then there was Teddy Victor, Sebastian Thomas — all people who have come from St. David's, one of the parishes of the country. Eunison is a teacher, a graduate of Howard University. Teddy Victor is an ex-policeman. Sebastian Thomas is a proprietor.

Now their aim basically was to do three things. They wanted first of all to run a weekly newspaper, 'The Jewel'; secondly, to engage in co-operative farming; and thirdly, to engage in social and cultural activities. For example, they organised football competitions and things like that. The paper, though became very popular and very successful.

And therefore, although they started off with a very, in their minds, non-political kind of bias and with a limited circulation, they found that they began to expand a bit and began to engage in more political issues in the sense of more analysis and so on.

In October 1972, another organisation was formed called MAPP — Movement for Assemblies of the People. Well that involved myself, Kenrick Radix (another lawyer), and there were a couple of teachers whose names I better don't call because they're in the civil service.

What was MAPP all about. What was the motivation behind MAPP.

Well MAPP was right from the start a political organisation, in the sense that it decided that what was required in Grenada, at this point, was a political organisation which could deal with the realities of seizing power from out of the hands of the Gairy regime.

The reason for the name Assemblies of the People, relates to the political form which the movement was recommending. Now people in Jewel and people in MAPP were pretty close and kept having meetings. Eunison Whiteman, in particular, very often sat in on weekly meetings of MAPP and in fact in March 1973 there was a convention held in St. David's at which it was decided that the two organisations would merge.

They did, in fact, merge and adopted the name New Jewel Movement. Now that new organisation became NJM and decided to use the issue of Independence as the main agitational basis around which they would begin to organise the country.

So from the start MAPP was an opposition political party.

Well . . . not Party, because MAPP's initial position in fact was to spend a great deal of its time criticising very severely the present electoral party political system we operate.

We saw the possibility of power being transferred, in fact, without necessarily the need for holding an election. So it was not a Party in that sense but definitely a political organisation with a very definite political aim.

*Could you spell that out some more.
What do you mean by transferring power
without an election.*

Well, our view is that electoral politics represent one form of politics. There's also another form, which loosely speaking you can call people's politics, whereby, for example, people can take the road, can take to street marches and demonstrations and that kind of thing and advocate the shutdown, civil disobedience, call on the government to resign and in that way in fact make a government dissolve. . . .

But this would be a strategy in political organisation, wouldn't it. I mean, it wouldn't be a permanent form of politics.

Well, quite. But our position, in fact, based on Assemblies of the People, is that elections in the sense of the elections we now know would be replaced by Assemblies.

This is based very broadly speaking on the Tanzanian system. We envisage a system which would have village assemblies and workers' assemblies.

In other words, politics where you live and politics where you work. The village assemblies would in turn elect parish assemblies and the village assemblies would also elect representatives to a National Assembly.

The National Assembly would be the government of the country. But the National Assembly would appoint or elect from its own members a National Assembly Council which would in effect be the present Cabinet you have.

Well, the charge of communism has been levelled against you. Are you in fact operating with a specific ideology.

We don't accept that an ideology has to be specific in the sense that you have to accept one of the given labels. I mean, if for example you say you are socialist, the obvious question is what does that mean? Are you a national socialist? Democratic Socialist? Labour Party Socialist? I mean that has come to mean virtually nothing.

Is it possible then that you're thinking about or trying to create some political form that is peculiar to Grenada or the Caribbean region.

To a great extent, yes. This isn't to say that we are pragmatic in the worse sense of that word; that we are just moving with any tide. We have very definite views on, for example, what must be done with the political apparatus, with the state apparatus. And these are views which we intend to implement.

SOMETHING IS ROTTEN IN THE STATE OF ANTIGUA

Teachers are moving into the mainstream of the anti-colonial struggle in the island state of Antigua.

The Antiguan Union of Teachers had been dormant for sometime, only to be revived, in the last year, under a new regime. The union issued a full package for negotiations with officials in the Ministry of Education. The package contained demands for higher wages, transportation allowances and other benefits. The union also launched a publication, 'New Teacher', whose editorial policy is highly critical of the local, colonial education system.

In the midst of negotiations, Juno Samuel, the new president, was arbitrarily transferred out of the Ministry of Education to a position, alien to his training and qualifications, in the Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism.

Under the Antiguan constitution, the Public Service Commission has the power to transfer public servants. The PSC, however, is nothing but a rubber stamp institution which has to follow the directions of government ministers.

Firstly, the president was not consulted about his new post. He received a letter on December 31, 1977, ordering him to report to work at the Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism on January 2 1978. Although teachers have been transferred in the past, they were transferred within the Ministry of Education. Those who were transferred outside of Education consented after consultation.

Furthermore, Juno Samuel is the first president of the Antiguan Union of Teachers to be transferred out of the Ministry of Education. It is customary for the government to transfer a public servant from an established post to another established one. A special post had to be created for Samuel in the Ministry of Economic Development.

A few weeks after the notification was sent, Samuel received a letter from his

new Permanent Secretary advising him 'not to attend any meetings outside his assigned duties'. In other words, he was not to attend any union meetings. After months of fruitless correspondence and discussions with the Public Service Commission, the Ministry of Education and the Premier, 13 teachers picketed two government ministries on June 7 1978, to protest the transfer of their president. The pickets were arrested and charged with an 1874 colonial law, "watching and besetting". The case of the 13 teachers was dismissed by the magistrate on June 12. The police appealed, and the Appeal Court, in December, deferred the case until March 9, 1979.

The 13 teachers were interdicted for six months in what was described as the best interests of the public service. They were paid, for six months, 20% of their salaries. Previously, civil servants, in a similar position, were paid no less than 50% and in some cases 75%.

On June 19, school children entered the struggle, protesting the arrests and interdiction of their teachers. They, too, faced the brutality of the police.

In December last year, 23 teachers picketed government ministries, protesting against the transfer of their president and the continued suspension of their 13 colleagues. The teachers were again arrested, beaten by the police and charged with "watching and besetting" and obstruction. Doctors and lawyers were refused access to those arrested, even though some of them were seriously injured. Food was refused for seven hours, as was bail until the following morning.

On January 1, 1979, eight teachers received letters from the Chief Establishment Officer, informing them that the Public Service Commission had 'retired them in the public interest'.

On the following day, the Premier, Vere Bird, in an address to the nation, confirmed that he had instructed the Public Service Commission to dismiss the

eight teachers.

The teachers were dismissed under section 16 of Statutory Rules and Order No 13 of 1979 of the constitution of Antigua. However, this section clearly states that public officers must be first judged guilty of a criminal offence by a court. None of the eight teachers were judged guilty of any crime. The dismissals were, therefore, not only arbitrary and unjust, but illegal. A strike has since been called by the union.

The teaching fraternity soon discovered that a struggle, limited to themselves, would have little impact on a repressive, colonial state. Together with the Antigua Workers Union, and the Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement, the Antigua Union of Teachers called for a day of solidarity with teachers on Tuesday, February 27 1979. Workers were called upon to stay away from work, shopkeepers were mobilised to close their shops. A grand mobilisation of the Antigua people would proceed to march from the headquarters of the Antigua Union of Teachers, Market Place in the capital, St Johns.

All this within weeks of a successful struggle to expel the American based

multi-national company, Space Research, from the shores of Antigua. Space Research, the Antiguan people discovered, was using Antigua as a base for the illegal shipment of arms to South Africa. A successful campaign forced the Antiguan Government to expel Space Research from the country.

One snag remained though. In accordance with the Public Order Act 1972, passed in the Antiguan legislature, the Police Commissioner has the power to sanction and regulate public meetings and public marches. The organisers of a demonstration must apply, so the Act says, to the Commissioner for permission to demonstrate.

The organisers of the February 27 demonstration complied. The Commissioner, Wright George, having received the letter of application, at once violated the terms of the Act. He chose not to reply. He did something else. Wright made use of the government controlled radio station to inform the nation that the march was illegal and he would use all the force at his disposal to suppress it. He followed this statement with a letter in the same tone and with the same content to the organisers.

The organisers responded to the Commissioner, now popularly known as Wrong George. They referred him to a "breach of law on your part". They continued: "Before you have granted us permission to march, you have already determined that the march is illegal. That is definitely out of order, completely wrong in common sense and law".

"If you had already refused us permission to march, then you could have written that the march is illegal. . . . what you have written constitutes an a priori judgement which is outside the scope of the discretion given you by the law and constitutes an abuse of the powers vested in you."

The Police Commissioner was cornered and the organisers tightened the screws: "We wish to draw your attention to the judgement of Justice Adams on the very same Public Act 1972".

"Justice Adams wrote", the organisers insisted "that the Commissioner of Police has the power to regulate public meetings and public marches. . . . that this point must not be employed as a power to emasculate: Please note that well", they warned. "Further, the judge pointed out that the court must look closely at any attempt to emasculate".

George was wrong in law and common sense. He was not regulating. He was clearly emasculating. Not only that, an Antiguan son of the working class found himself on the side of colonial reaction. Ten thousand Antiguan citizens confirmed this. They gathered at Market Place on February 27, Public Order Act or no!

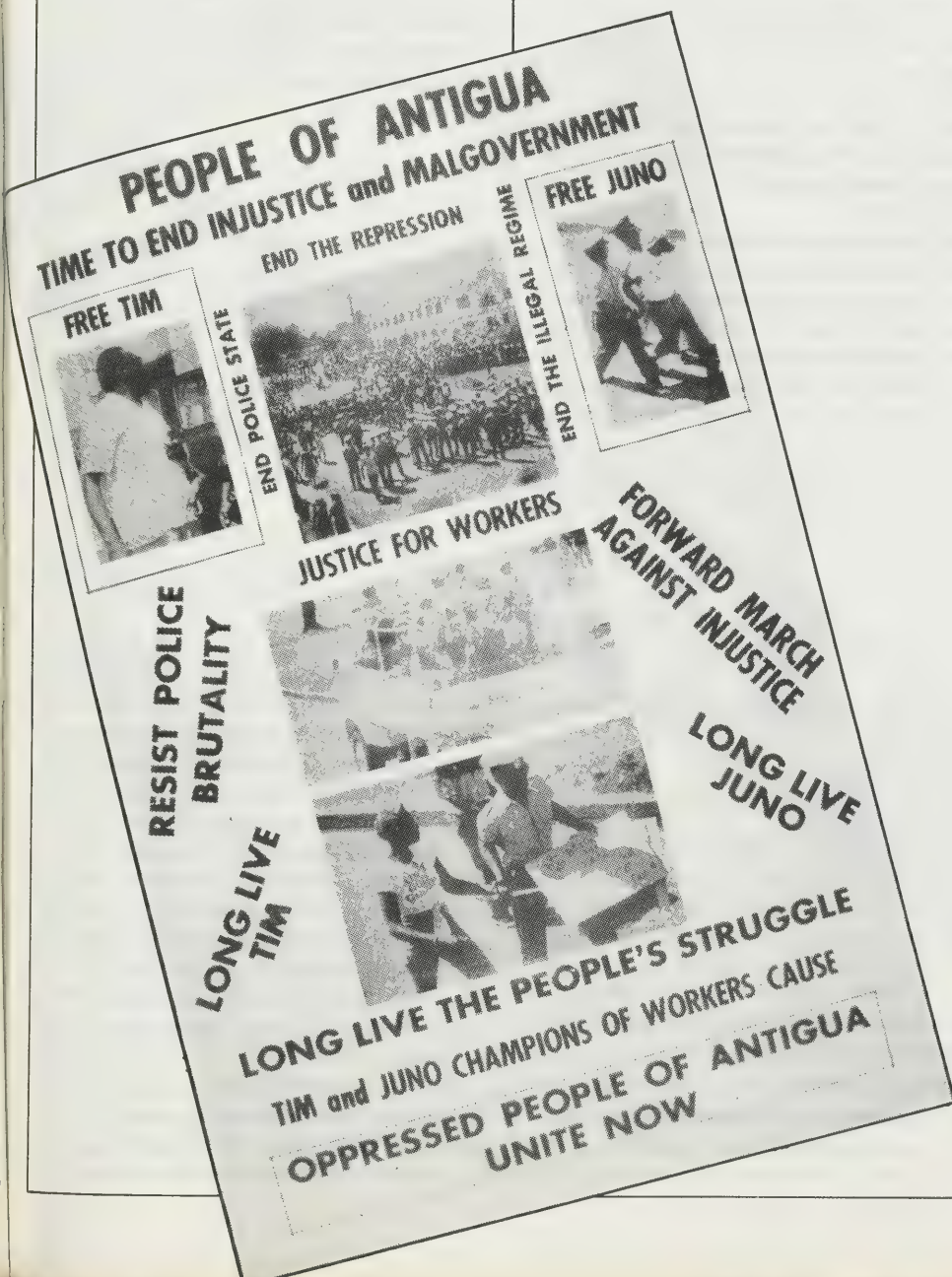
Having marched for a distance of twenty yards, out came the tear gas and police clubs. The demonstrators were attacked with the full might of state power, occupied now by the Antigua Labour Party and its industrial wing, the Antigua Trades and Labour Union.

Several arrests were made and the prisoners bailed, except two — Tim Hector, Chairman of the Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement and Juno Samuel, President of the Antigua-Union of Teachers.

Both were charged with organising, taking part and leading a march. Secondly, with inciting a march. They were refused bail and remanded in custody. That was on Wednesday, February 28. They appeared in court once more on Tuesday, March 6 and were again refused bail.

Government lackeys have been boasting that Samuel and Hector will be imprisoned until the trial date in April when they will be called to trial and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. A priori justice indeed!

We call on our readership to flood the office of the Premier of Antigua with protests. Copies of protests should be sent to Race Today, 74 Shakespeare Road, London SE24 OPT.



BACKLASH

THE ANTIGUAN CONNECTION

In last month's issue of 'Race Today', we reported just how the multinational company, Space Research Corporation, used Antigua, a British colony, as a staging post for illegal arms shipments to Southern Africa. All evidence pointed to the complicity of the American and British governments in this arms trade.

In the face of local and international protests, Space Research Corporation hired an American State Department security agent, Warren Hart, to assassinate one of the leaders of the local protest movement, Tim Hector, the Chairman of the Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement.

An officer of the Antigua Defence Force, a Sergeant-Major Maurice James, was involved on the orders of Warren Hart, in removing to safety the weapons to be used in the assassination. Britain is responsible for the Antigua Defence Force.

A vigilant and alert Antiguan population was able to foil the assassination attempts and with vocal protests from abroad, the Antiguan government was forced to expel Space Research Corporation from the country. Warren Hart was deemed a prohibited immigrant.

Below, we publish an exchange of correspondence between Member of Parliament, Alex Lyon, and the Foreign Office on this issue and telegrams of protest sent from Britain to the Antigua government.

To Vere Bird
Premier of Antigua
West Indies

I request that the government of Antigua take urgent measures to protect the life of Tim Hector and prevent his assassination, and that the activities of Space Research in Antigua be thoroughly investigated so as to prevent any further arms

going to the South African government.

John La Rose
London U K
November 1978

Brought to my attention the plot to assassinate ACLM Chairman, Tim Hector, for his part in exposing Space Research issue.

Understand that your government is in complicity. Demand maximum protection for Hector's life and immediate deportation of assassin, Warren Hart. Space Research must go.
Darcus Howe
Editor Race Today
London U K

We demand:

That your government protect the life of ACLM Chairman Tim Hector from Space Research assassination attempt. That the assassin Warren Hart be deported.

Space Research must go.

Bradford Black Collective
Bradford U K

The Rt. Hon. Dr. David Owen, MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Dear David

Mr. Darcus Howe of 'Race Today' tells me that there is now good evidence that the defence forces in Antigua have been involved in a plot to assassinate the chairman of the Antiguan Caribbean Liberation Movement, Mr. Tim Hector, follow-

ing the revelations on Panorama about provision of military equipment to South Africa via Antigua.

Could you tell me:-

- (1) Whether the allegations of involvement in the plot are correct?

- (2) If so, what steps are you taking to deal with the matter?
- (3) What steps are the Government taking to deal with the matters raised in the Panorama programme?

Yours sincerely
Alex Lyon
House of Commons
London
5 December 1978

Dear Alex,
David Owen has asked me to thank you for your letter of 5 December about Antigua.

Mr Hector has alleged that the Space Research Corporation (SRC), the organisation at the centre of the Panorama programme's investigation, are plotting to assassinate him. He has made this allegation in letters he has written to David Owen and the Premier of Antigua, amongst others, and has handed out copies of these letters on the streets of Antigua. I was not aware that the accusations included the Antigua Defence Force.

The answer to your first question is that we do not know whether Mr Hector's claims are justified or not. He repeated them to the Deputy British Government Representative in Antigua (Mr Thow) last month, who advised him to contact the appropriate Antiguan authorities. Mr Thow also mentioned the matter to the Antiguan Attorney General.

Antigua, as an Associated State, is responsible for its own internal government. Intervention on our part in a domestic matter of this kind, therefore, does not arise (to answer your second question).

As regards the Panorama programme itself, (your third question), we are in touch with the Antiguan, US and Cana-

dian Governments. We have handed over to the Antigua Government, for whose external affairs we are still responsible, a transcript of the programme and have asked for their comments which we expect to receive later this month. In the light of their findings, we shall then consider what further action we should take. As you may know, the Antigua Government announced on 22 November that they had instructed the SRC to phase out their operations in Antigua.

Similar allegations to those in the programme were made last year by Mr Joshua Nkomo and subsequently by Mr Hector. As a result, the Antigua Government looked into the situation and published a report with its findings in April.

Its main conclusion, which we saw no reason to doubt at the time, was that the SRC were not supplying arms to Southern Africa through Antigua.

Ted Rowlands
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London
18 December 1978

FORGING A COMMON FRONT

In October of last year, a delegation from the Oilfield Workers Trade Union in Trinidad and Tobago, led by the President General, George Weekes, visited Britain.

Speaking to an invited audience in Brixton, Weekes called for mutual solidarity between the struggles of the black working classes in Britain and the liberation struggles of the workers in the newspaper industry who were locked out when the management of 'The Guardian' newspaper refused to negotiate workers' demands for increases in wages.

As we go to press 'Guardian' workers remain locked out and they have taken the important step of using their skills

to publish their own newspaper 'The Workers Guardian' with the assistance of the Oilfield Workers Trade Union.

Below we publish messages of support from Britain to the 39th annual conference of the OWTU and the Guardian workers.

Bank and General Workers Trade Union
Charlotte Street
Port of Spain
Trinidad
West Indies

We salute your struggles to win from the 'Guardian' newspaper management increased benefits for the workers in that industry.

We join you in common solidarity in your fight against the colonial authorities who are determined to rob black labour internationally of the ground we have managed to win in our centuries of insurrections and military struggle.

We share an international experience which leads us to stand with you in the impending battle for the seizure of political power from our colonial oppressors.

Race Today Collective
London England
February 1979

To Oilfield Workers Trade Union
San Fernando
Trinidad

Dear Comrades,

The Black Parents Movement, a section of the black working class in Britain, congratulates you on achieving another congress, the congress of a leading section of the workers of Trinidad & Tobago.

Our movement, and the Alliance of which we are part together with the Black Youth Movement, the Race Today Collective and Bradford Black Collective see the need for establishing a Common Front of Mutual Solidarity

and Struggle. This will unite the people of Caribbean origin abroad — especially in Britain, the USA and Canada — to fight against our oppression and to struggle for the workers' and people's power, along with the workers and people of the Caribbean.

Our strength abroad resides not only in our own numbers and organisation but also in the positions of power and influence the black working class and communities have won in these societies and the perspective we hold on the general struggles of these societies in the heartland of imperialist power.

We pay close and detailed attention to events in the Caribbean and we encourage you to do the same with our struggles abroad.

The black working class in Britain face many problems with the police, with education and school authorities, with the housing authorities, with employers and with the State. Unemployment among black youth runs at about 40%. The black youth have also been programmed for the worst jobs and they have rejected this.

But we are not victims. We have also fought and won many victories and captured positions from which to wage further battles. Some of these battles — in Carnival 1976 and 1977, in Grunwick, in Haringey, in Imperial Typewriters, at Fords, in the courts with the police, in the factories, streets and schools — have become well known. So too have your struggles, especially since 1962, when the Rebels led by George Weekes captured power in the O.W.T.U. with the help and support of radical and revolutionary groups in Trinidad.

Nor do we forget the glorious days of June 19th 1937 and the decades of working class experience since then.

We join hands in this spirit, linking past with present, present with future. Let us move forward to the Common Front of Mutual Solidarity and Struggle and to Workers Power.

Signed — John La Rose
Co-ordinating Council
Black Parents Movement
London
England
November 1978

Against All Flags

Public Image Ltd, Britain's leading new wave rock group, heads the bill at an international benefit concert to be held at the Kings Hall, Belle Vue, Manchester on Friday February 23. Merger a home-grown Reggae group; the Pop Group, an outstanding new wave formation; Britain's only Reggae poet, Linton K. Johnson complete the cast. Proceeds from the concert will go to 'Race Today'.

Lead singer of Public Image Ltd, John Lydon, formerly Johnny Rotten of the Sex Pistols, discusses his work, his social and political attitudes with Linton K. Johnson.

Briefly, for 'Race Today' readers, can you tell us something about your past, your background.

My family came to England from south west Ireland. At first we lived in caravans around the country, then we moved into two rooms, with a tin bath. I grew up in north London. At that time there were still feelings of hate against Irish people from the English. Irish people were looked upon as wild animals and, like, the kids would suffer. You know, you had to go through these nice English estates to get to school and that was pure hell. It only lasted for a while and then it stopped, because there were the blacks now to moan at; they've always got to feel better than other people.

Like myself, you grew up in Britain, and what we have in common is that we are

both coming out of colonial situations. To what extent has your Irish background shaped you as an individual and your personal outlook on life.

Obviously, a hell of a lot; you're brought up in that atmosphere, you think that way, you think Irish. Its affected me, its made me think much more openly and it has made me clearer in my attitudes.

Do you see any similarities between Irish immigrants and blacks in Britain.

Obviously. I mean they sent Irish slaves to Jamaica just the same as they sent African slaves there. They used to import Irish people over to build railways in this country and that too was slave labour. The Irish were starved out of their country. The English took all the food because they were involved in some silly war with the Dutch in Africa, and they didn't have enough food of their own, so they decided to raid the country next to theirs. That's why the Irish moved out of Ireland en masse. They had to because they were starving to death.

How do you see the present situation in Northern Ireland.

The catholics and the protestants are being manipulated by the British, they want them kept apart. Like they can't say it's a catholic/protestant problem, 'cause down in the south of Ireland there's a hell of a lot of protestants, a hell of a lot, and there's no trouble going on down there.

How do you see the role of the IRA in the struggle being waged in Northern Ireland.

They're doing it wrong. Like all terrorist groups, they're killing the wrong people. Why can't they attack the people that are creating that situation? Why can't they blow up the important ones? Blowing up Woolworth serves nothing; it doesn't help the Irish cause; that doesn't make Ireland united.

But it might create security problems for the British though.

Not of any real significance, it's just something to read in the papers.

Do you think there is a lot of support amongst Irish people in Britain for that struggle.

No. The majority are, like, married with families and settled down and just don't care anymore. I support the cause — Ireland should be Irish — but I don't support the means.

'Race Today' readers aren't that familiar with the recent popular music movement called punk. As you have been associated with the movement from its very inception, can you give us your assessment of it, what it was and what it represented.

Well, I created punk, there's no point in being modest about it. I wrote all the songs that started it and had a band (the Sex Pistols) that didn't realise what we were doing. When it came to the crunch in America to finally make a stand, the other three (Sid Vicious, Paul Cook and Steve Jones) backed away. They weren't serious at all; they just didn't realise what they were doing and didn't really care. Punk represented a complete break with everything, attitudes, everything; no longer being manipulated. As an entire force, it would have been brilliant. It would have been the first time ever that there had been anything so together amongst young people in this country and we done it so quickly, so effectively. But the bands involved in the movement got corrupted because of money and ego. They believed what they read in the press about themselves, and they began to see their pictures in the papers and it made them very happy, and the movement just fell to pieces.

What was the role of the Sex Pistols in the movement.

They brought fun back into music, rock music, heavy music. They were the first, the rest came after.

Why did the band break up.

They became corrupted just like everybody else, and I just walked away. I wasn't interested in sitting on a beach with Ronald Biggs writing songs about coshing a train driver. It didn't appeal to my sense of humour. They just wanted to make money, pure and simple, and to be heroes: guitar heroes, drum heroes, pop stars — that kind of garbage.

Is punk now dead.

It never really got off the ground. People didn't adopt the philosophy and the attitudes behind it, just the fucking clothes. You see, at one time music was strictly for the middle-class and the wealthy, the sons of lord this, that and the other, and university students. People of the streets never picked up guitars like that. Now, the aim of the punk movement was to make things instant, spontaneous, to create your own things, your own culture; things you've made yourself and know you are a part of, instead of, like, the fodder they throw



at you. It could have been quite an effective little unit, but it fell apart: members who were, like, in the journalism side of punk — they all fell apart. They found that it was much easier to go with the flow.

But wasn't all that inevitable, because, like you're forwarding a movement which is anti all what the mass media stands for, anti what the music business stands for, and yet you're operating within their limitations. Of course they'll try to manipulate what you're doing to make the maximum amount of profit from it.

Well, you try to use the record companies as a means to an end. Yes, they will succeed in some minor senses to manipulate what you're trying to do, but at least you're making an effort to change it; whereas before nobody bothered. It's a slow process, but things will change if, like, there's a constant enough drift that way.

What is your assessment of what is left of the movement.

Well, look, there are bands like the Clash, for example, who I don't like because they've never made it clear where they

stand. It's too easy to say, 'I'm political', and not give any idea of which side of the border you're on. They strictly stand, like, on the fence. Sham 69 are the same. All these bands, they've never declared what they are for. They just go with the flow and that's no good at all. They're just as big a problem as the shit they are meant to replace, because they've got an audience of confused followers who don't know what they are meant to be supporting.

Well, you've picked up the pieces and have moved on to form a new band called Public Image Limited

Who are brilliant by the way.

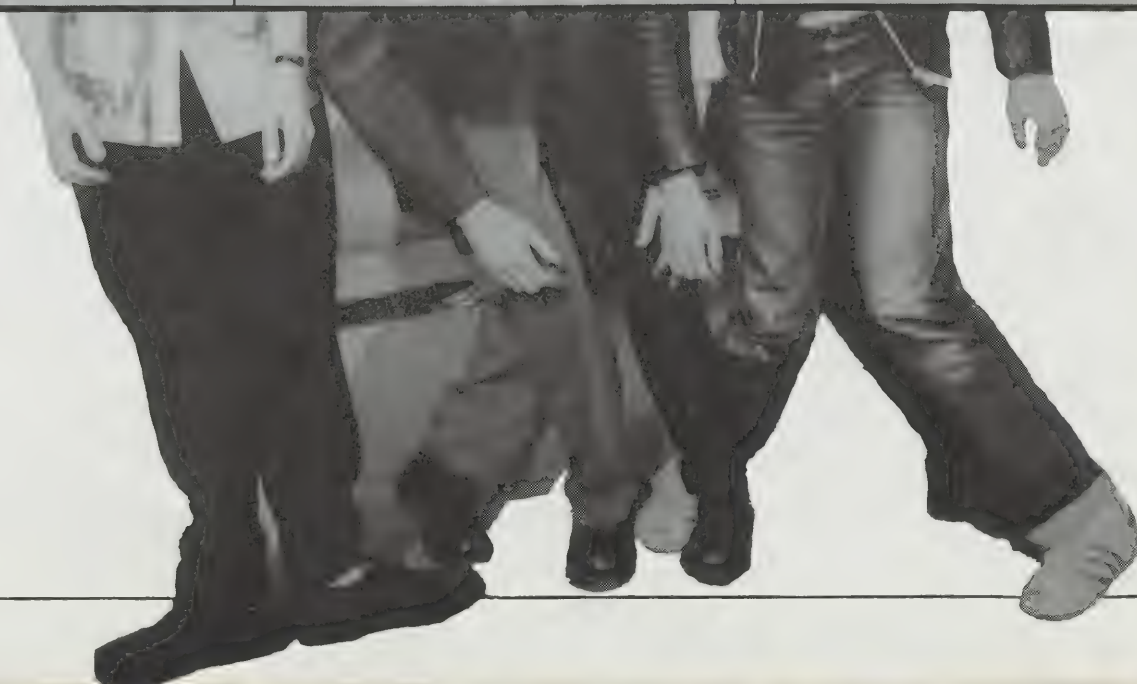
How would you describe the stance of PIL and the music they play.

Well, one of our aims is to make rock music dance music. The two don't seem to go together that often now-a-days. It's not as simple as that though. Like, we tend to take the piss out of the whole record company image building schemes that they run for bands, where people don't buy the records but the image that come with it. We're also trying to show the record buying public that the bums can do it, can make weird sounds that

aren't so weird after all, and take away all that intellectual bullshit that surrounds everything. We're trying to awaken people to their own inner possibilities. Listen, guys like Rick Wakeman, well, what the hell is he doing? OK so he plays a nifty keyboard, big deal. But can you dance to it? I know it's mental torture. I mean what are a band like Queen about? They take six months to record an album and they're in the studio all that time. What a waste!

Can you give us a brief description of the numbers on PIL's current album release called 'Public Image'.

Well, 'Theme', right, its got a kind of chorus that says "I wish I could die". That's fine. All the music papers printed that but they didn't print the second line: "I will survive". That song is about feeling miserable about the situation you're in, but you know you'll come out of it. 'Anna Lisa' is about a girl who was starved to death in a local church because they thought she was possessed by the devil. 'Public Image' is my little message to the world: "I'm not the same as when I began / I'll not be treated as property / there's two sides to every story". 'Attack' is a political song. It's about those dictat-



ing bastards: "You who sit on golden asses / tinkling your cocktail glasses / you smile so politely / you think me so unsightly . . . / you attack and confiscate / legally with magistrate / Attack!" 'Low Life' is pretty obvious. It's about low life in the business. 'Fodder Stomp' — we did that for a laugh and it worked out great and I'm proud of it.

Some artists — musicians, writers and so on — believe that by talking about things political they're themselves contributing to changing society. What is your view on this.

I don't have to resort to political clichés. It's obvious we're political. It's the stance that says it all and people know. It's no good waffling away trendy slogans; it doesn't get you anywhere.

Do you belong to any political organisation.

No. None. I think it's ridiculous that there's only three main political parties to choose from in the country. Your choice is so limited and no one is offering any alternatives.

How do you see the white left in Britain.

A bunch of idiots; they don't know what they want. Middle-class mind-games, that's all it is. They're just not organised enough and they don't seem to have any coherent view on anything. Like they're moaning about everything in sight but they aren't doing anything to better it themselves. How are the public gonna know what their motives are when they aren't making it clear to them? They don't want to forward any solutions. I think a lot of them are just bored middle-class types with chips on their shoulders, because they got slung out of university. There are a few genuines amongst them, but they're being swamped.

What do you think of the attempts of groups like the Socialist Workers Party, the Anti-Nazi League, Rock Against Racism and what not, to combat racism.

Completely juvenile. I mean, listen, groups like the National Front were set up to create a diversion from the real problems that are facing working class people in this country. But all it does is to split the labour vote, cause, like, these fascist groups are based in slum areas like the East End. It appeals to working class people who are certainly not into the Conservatives, and the SWP are throwing bricks back at them and stuff. Well, they're just following suit, falling into the hands of the same people who create these situations deliberately. They're

fools. They have nothing definite in their policy to stop situations. It's no good creating a hullabaloo after the event, now is it?

And in the final analysis it's blacks and Asians who have to defend ourselves against the terrorist attacks.

Well, let's put it this way: who are your friends? They're never around when you want them.

What is the history of your relationship to reggae music.

I started getting into reggae from way back when, from school days. Like, you were brought up on it; it was always there all the time. That was before it became fashionable.

What is it about reggae that you find attractive.

It's just perfect dance music, you can dance to it without busting your bollocks off. It's like a heart-beat with matching rhythms. Now rock music isn't like that at all. You try nodding your head to a rock record and you'll get fucking dizzy. Another thing I like about reggae is the contrast between the highs of the treble and the depth of the bass. It's so effective, unlike those middle-of-the-road productions. But reggae is only one type of a whole variety of music I listen to. I also like to listen to traditional folk music, jazz, classical and god knows what. It's very ignorant to link yourself to one form of music, very silly.

Why have you agreed to do the Creation for Liberation benefit in Manchester on February 23.

Well, I'd read some of what you said in the music papers and I'd read some of the 'Race Today' magazines, but I didn't really understand what 'Race Today' was actually about. Then we talked and you explained it to me. Once I understood, it seemed so proper and right — the magazine and the approach — like, it can't be knocked and it has to be supported. It's not a ridiculous movement and it's certainly not racist. But, like, I'm not doing the gig for any kind of 'black and white unite and fight' bullshit, because I will not patronise. We have to stop that bullshit. I'm doing it 'cause, like, you're doing something constructive. It's as simple as that. Everything else is abstract. But of course that's not what the music press is gonna take to, is it?

Have you considered the possibility of being called names like 'nigger-lover' by racists and fascists for doing the gig.

Well, if morons are gonna deal in those terms, let them go right ahead. I really don't care, 'cause it's obvious that those people are too fucking ignorant to help to bring about any real change for the better. I have already been called nigger-lover by the NF. They issued a large article on me once, saying that I would be one of the people to be eliminated in their new far out democracy. Ridiculous

Front Line Fighter

A documentary film of Reggae Poet Linton K. Johnson, Directed by Franco Rosso.

Reviewed by
Akua Rugg

'Dread Beat and Blood' is the name of a documentary film, in colour, about the life and work of young Jamaican poet and political activist, Linton Kwesi Johnson.

It is an unsentimental, sensitive, exciting and thought provoking cinematic portrait of an artist who, in addition to having had his poetry published and recorded, is a front line fighter against the colonization of blacks in British society. The strength of the film lies in the fact that, in society today, artists are usually seen as extraordinary people above and beyond the understanding of ordinary folk. 'Dread Beat and Blood' shows us how Linton has put his talents at the service of the black working class from which he comes, and that this background has been a source of strength to him.

Because Linton is both poet and politico, the film is divided into two parts. Firstly, the audience is given an insight into how Linton actually sets about producing his work. Then, we see him interacting with the people whose lives provide him with the subject matter for his poetry.

The film keeps our attention at all times because we can identify with Linton's triumphs and successes. When, for instance, he is interviewed by a middle-class English woman from the LBC, he runs rings around her with a vibrant and dazzling reading of one of his

poems. We feel that his superiority belongs also to us. We are elated that he has established this superiority, not by playing the literary black superstar, but simply by demonstrating the sheer power of his talent. Linton makes no concessions by trying to explain himself or his work to the interviewer, because it is not to the section of society that she represents that he wants to speak.

This sequence is just one of many that shows Linton in his role as professional artist. We get further insights into the way Linton produces his works of art, as the camera tracks him during a poetry reading he gives in a small community centre hall. The multi-racial audience is clearly delighted that here is an artist who is willing to come to them rather than having to seek him out in the prestigious surroundings usually associated with an artistic performance.

Even when we see Linton surrounded by the formidable electronic trappings of his art in a sound recording studio, he doesn't try to blind us with the glamour of his position. He tells us that he never imagined, when he was working as a factory hand, that he would ever have had these kinds of resources at his disposal. He makes us understand that he has not always been in the strong position he now finds himself, but has fought and struggled for it as we perhaps could. More informally, we see Linton working with other black musicians in practice sessions. Again, his art is shown to be a part of the ordinary experience of blacks, who have always made music and revelled in verbal play and story telling, and know how to enjoy themselves even when they are working.

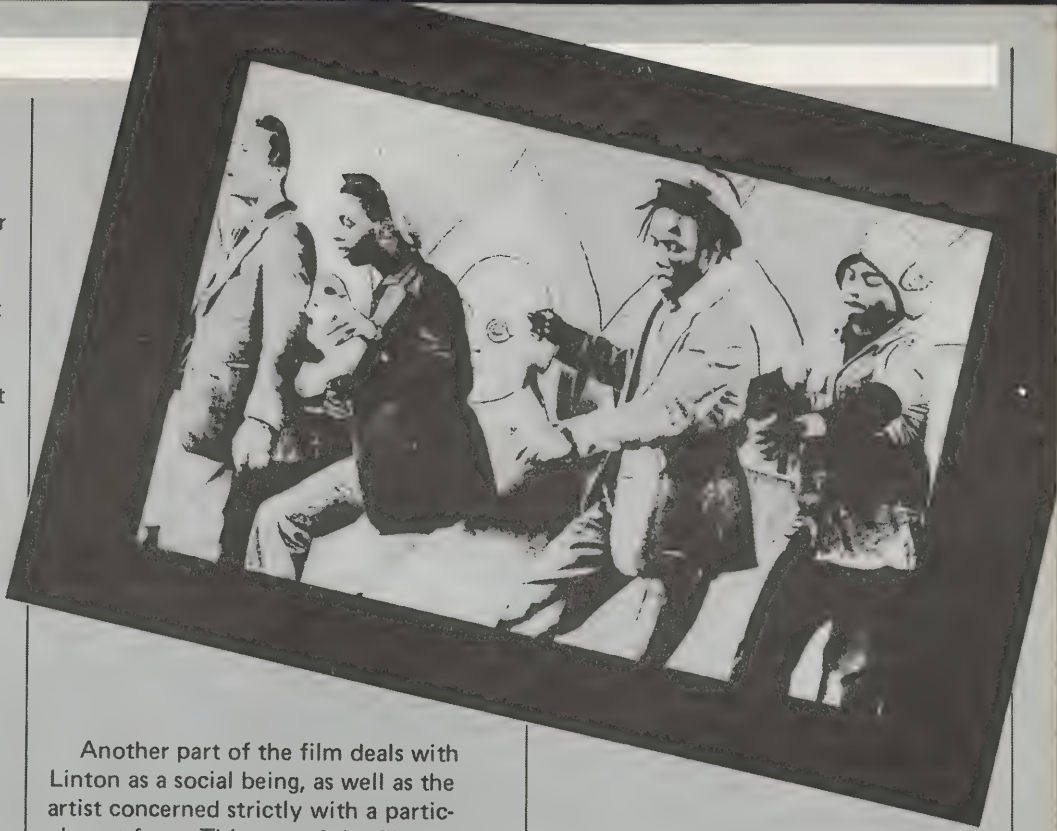
Another part of the film deals with Linton as a social being, as well as the artist concerned strictly with a particular art form. This part of the film is particularly interesting as it shows quite clearly how Linton fuses his art with his life. We see him socialising with friends in a Brixton Youth Club, playing dominos with them. In a cultural centre in north London, where he worked as a librarian, he discusses, with unemployed black youth, police harassment which he, as a rebel youth, himself experienced. When Linton revisits his former school, he coaxes them into questioning the ideas they are being taught at school.

All these people clearly have to respect Linton as much for his integrity and lack of pretension as for his talent as an artist.

Last, but not least, the film deals with Linton's role as a political activist who has a particular point of view on how society should work. At the start of the film, we see Linton walking through Brixton market, and as he does so he connects the past to the present by pointing out the parallels between the Brixton he now lives in and Jamaica which he left as a boy of 11. He makes it quite clear that the strong position he now finds himself in — being able to work professionally as a poet — is based on his roots in rural Jamaica, not on the education he received from the British educational system, which thwarted rather than developed his talent.

Some of the most powerful scenes of the film show blacks rebelling and resisting attempts by the British state to destroy their cultural traditions brought with them from their homelands. There is a brilliant and exhilarating sequence showing black youths defeating police attempts to 'mash' up the Notting Hill Carnival. Equally powerful, are the shots of the black community in Bradford, marching in protest against the framing and jailing of an innocent working class black family man. These sequences have not been inserted into the film merely to sensationally illustrate the life and times of a revolutionary black poet. They show the conditions of the lives of the people that inspire Linton's work. As Linton states, he saw a lot of things happening on the streets to blacks, both young and old, and wanted to contribute his talents to their struggles.

'Dread Beat and Blood' shows us precisely what Linton's contribution to our struggles is. He has fulfilled what is surely the task of the artist in society: to re-



mind us where we are coming from, to tell us the truth about where we are at now, and to point directions in which we best might go. Check out Linton's work, you will find all of these lessons in them.

The making of 'Dread Beat and Blood' is an important event for us, if we accept that our culture is a powerful weapon in our struggle against the movement to colonize blacks living in England. The medium of film, which is able to show every side of a subject, as no other form of communication can, reveals to us certain important aspects of Linton's life and work that some of us might miss when reading or listening to the poems. The release of the film could bring to a large section of the black community a knowledge of the contribution that black artists like Linton make to our social and political struggles. Hopefully, it is only the first of many films that add to our knowledge of our culture, past and present, and therefore to our power.

Order film 'Dread Beat and Blood' from Race Today.

Playing Games

The Chess Players
Directed by Satyajit Ray

Reviewed by
Naseem Khan

Towards the end of 'The Chess Players', Satyajit Ray's new film at the Academy there's a long shot, striking in its simplicity. In the empty distance, a long marching column steadily makes its insect way across the screen — horsemen, soldiers, elephants, artillery. It is the British, moving inexorably into the Indian state of Oudh.

'The Chess Players' is a remarkable film. Controlled and clear, it is also Ray's first film in the more generally accessible Hindi, rather than in Bengali. Ray deserves the wider audience.

His film limits itself to a few days at the start of 1856. The place is Oudh, one of the last of the independent princely states, and, as such, a thorn in the flesh of both Lord Dalhousie and the local British Resident, General Outram, (Richard Attenborough). To add fuel to their distaste is the King himself, Wajid Ali Shah: a dilettante more interested in turning a poem on a political event than in taking vigorously reformatory action.

His court is lavish and refined. His courtiers are personified in the characters of Mir (Saeed Jaffrey) and Mirza (Sanjeev Kumar), sons of lines of warriors run to seed, whose only battles are now conducted on the chessboard.

As the British play their own brand of political chess, intent on swallowing Oudh, Mir and Mirza see no further than their chessboard. Rumours and reports reach them, to be brushed aside. The death of a friend is important only in

that it prevents them borrowing his board. Their wives variously take lovers or pine, reduced to shadows before their husbands' all-consuming passion for the so-called game of kings.

Eventually, harried by the outside world, the two friends take refuge in a fly-ridden village outside the city, to continue their game undisturbed. Behind them, in the distance, that long quiet shot unfurls. The British, unopposed, enter Lucknow.



'The Chess Players' brings together in a masterly fashion a number of Ray's concerns in his previous films — the responsibility of the individual in the face of social change, the victim pinned down by historical forces, the conflict of tradition and modernity. It is especially significant to compare it with one of Ray's 60's films, 'The Music Room'. The earlier film charted the decline of a landowner — a discerning and passionate patron of classical Indian arts — as against the material rise of his vulgar, upstart, back-slapping neighbour. In that film, there was little question where Ray's sympathies swung, despite his awareness of the appalling irresponsibility of the landowner.

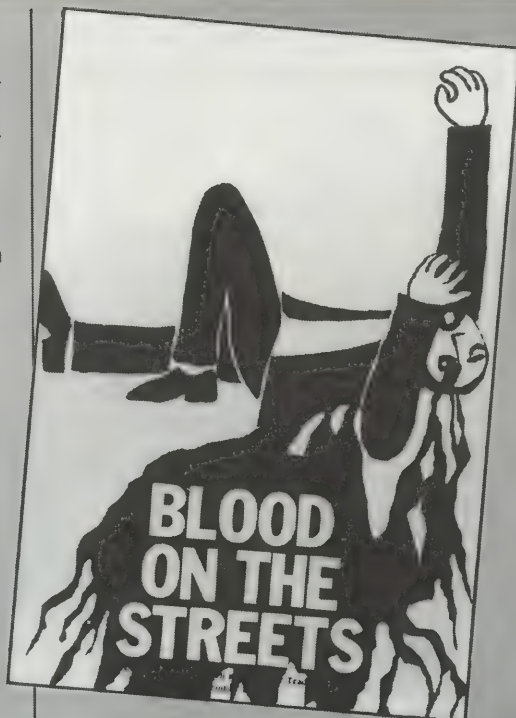
In 'The Chess Players', that contest is more subtle; and Ray's own view is both sharper and more objective. Artistic refinement here becomes another face of decadence: a cocoon against the outside world. And it proves insubstantial. On the dusty village ground, outside Lucknow's exquisite confines, it crumbles. The only person with enough sense of reality to realise it, is the village-boy Mir and Mirza have collared to provide their creature-comforts as they continue their game.

Hamlet Without The Prince

Blood on the Streets
Published by Bethnal Green and Stepney
Trades Council £1

Reviewed by
Farrukh Dhondy

Imagine Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. Or imagine the Hull Prison enquiry, which has resulted at the time of writing in the prosecution in the courts of prison officers, conducted by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Human Beings without the benefit of statements from prisoners. If you can put yourself in that frame of mind, you've tuned into the wavelength of 'Blood on the Streets', a report from dedicated trade unionists with large hearts, some pretensions to sociology and friends who are willing to act as interpreters.



In Britain today, an enquiry into racial attacks has to be a political weapon. If it is not conceived or forged in that armoury, it becomes one more tear in the meagre pool of stagnant sympathy that whites offer blacks as a substitute for strategy in the anti-colonial class struggle. Political weaponry is a tricky business. The hand has to be firm, the sight sure. 'Blood on the Streets' was clearly not conceived as part of this weaponry. It was written by whites, produced by whites whose union card credentials are reproduced on the inside cover (apart from the mysterious 'Harish' who happens to have no surname and no union to his credit) and is directed at a readership of people who want to know that "In Sylhet most of the people are illiterate, particularly the women", or that "the notion of free welfare services as of right comes as a strange concept to Bengalees".

If my recollection serves me well, in the summer of '76, at a demonstration called by the Anti-Racist Committee for the Defence of Asians in East London (ARC-AEL), a member of the self same Trades Council took the platform. He announced to the audience of three thousand Asians that he represented ten thousand trade unionists who deeply cared about racial attacks on Asians. A heckler said "where are the nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine?" and won some applause from the audience. The heckler was, of course, being unfair. There were at least six more trade unionists in that hall, but like all hecklers he hadn't bothered to do a head-count. He was going by the spirit of the thing.

If the report, with its BBC-like equivocation, is an attempt to get those nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine

interested, I wish it luck and await developments. I don't know how welcome these developments will be to the Asian community, which at this time is demanding an enquiry into the facts of police inaction and into the harassment of Asians by the police, because the report says, "A number of informants to the Trades Council enquiry spoke highly of the speed and competence of the police in investigating and dealing with the matters they had complained about. This situation reflects the Trades Council's own experience when we have reported cases to the Chief Inspectors in charge of Community Liaison". To be fair, the same paragraph goes on to say that Bengali victims of violence expressed no confidence in the police force at all. Does that very contradiction reflect on the incapacity of the investigators to incorporate an Asian perspective into an enquiry about Asian people? Or does it simply reflect the fact that a tiny feather of the democratic and reformist wing of the 'Labour movement' has strayed into a territory on which it wants to make class peace rather than class war?

While the introduction to the report speaks of the hearts and minds of people, of the 'dignity of men standing supreme', the bulk of the pamphlet is dedicated to the proposition that "Action is needed immediately by the police, by the Commission For Racial Equality and by the government so that hope and confidence can be restored to all of our fellow citizens. . .". Despite the chapters, dedicated to education in Tower Hamlets, to housing, to employment, the pamphlet does not see itself as part of the struggle to overthrow the system or the state that perpetrates the new colonisation of international labour and tolerates or encourages racial attacks. It restricts itself to offering information of a kind as a pep pill to the trade union movement and the government which allies itself with that movement.

No wonder then, that the chapter on housing doesn't mention the self-activity of the Asian community over the last few years to force the hand of the state. No wonder that it is left to the Equal Rights Committee of the Trades Unions to list in the appendix the only cases of racial attack that the report bothers to document. No wonder that, in the introduction, it has to acknowledge a central flaw: "many victims were unwilling to come forward with information or to talk about their experience. . . after investigating a large number of similar cases, our young Bengalee interpreters said they were no longer willing to continue with the exercise. . . They were angry at being used for what they saw as some esoteric white game that was rapidly becoming meaningless to them".

Vacancies

HAREHILLS AND CHAPELTOWN LAW CENTRE

Requires legal community worker to join small staff: multi racial inner city area of Leeds.

Application by 31st March, to:
25 Chapeltown Road, Leeds 7 or
phone 0532 629055.

TOWER HAMLETS LAW CENTRE

We are looking for a lawyer who is able to speak Bengali to join our Race Unit, which is currently staffed by three workers, and provides a legal resource to the Bengali community living throughout Tower Hamlets.

Application form and job description from Tower Hamlets Law Centre, 341 Commercial Road, London E1 2PS; phone 790 6311.

Closing date: March 1st.

NEWHAM RIGHTS CENTRE SOLICITOR

Newham Rights Centre, a Community Law Centre in the East End of London, needs a Solicitor. Experience in Housing Law would be an advantage. Interesting opportunity to become involved in group test cases and community legal work. Please apply with a full C.V. giving details of your legal experience and reasons for applying to 309 Barking Road, London, E.6.

(No application forms or written details will be supplied but if you wish to discuss the post please ring Jon Rosser or Roger Burridge on 01-471 8226)

ISLINGTON TASK FORCE

Requires fourth team member for work with pensioners — supporting pensioners' action group, welfare rights advice, volunteer organising and liaison with other voluntary organisations. Commitment to collective working essential.

Salary — £3,732 p.a.

For job description contact 10 Corsica Street, London, N5. Tel: 01-359 0056/7

Closing date: 9th March

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

Project Officer in Race Relations Education

This is a new post in the area of continuing education, to investigate possible educational materials in conjunction with user groups and other interested bodies in the area of race relations. The project officer will be responsible for liaising with potential funding bodies and formulating proposals leading to the development of practical initiatives in adult education.

Applicants should preferably have practical and administrative experience in working with adult multi-racial groups and with ethnic minorities, and an educational background in one of the areas germane to the field of race relations. Some teaching experience would be an advantage.

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Race Today

Voice of the Black Community in Britain

May/June 1979

25p

Southall: what is to be done

fashist an di attack
noh baiddah worry 'bout dat
fashists on di attack
wi wi' fite dem back
fashists an di attack
den wi wi' countah-attack
fashists an di attack
we wi' drive dem back



LETTERS

'Dread, Beat an' Blood

Dear Race Today,

The BBC has withdrawn the film 'Dread, Beat an' Blood', about the poetry and politics of the black writer Linton Kwesi Johnson, on the grounds that it contains material too sensitive to be broadcast just before a general election.

To anyone familiar with the absurdities committed in the name of politically balanced broadcasting, this decision will come as no surprise, since a certain bemused cynicism has now become part of the basic defence mechanism of many people working in the media.

No wonder, when the idea of balance allows for the censorship of one of the most powerfully articulate members of a community which up to now has been consistently misrepresented by the media.

If BBC programmers can get away with this, what will we let them get away with next?

Yours sincerely,
Nicholas Pole,
London NW8.

The case of Abdul Azad

Dear Race Today,

I am writing to let you know about the case of Abdul Azad of Oldham.

Abdul is a 17 year old Bengali youth from Oldham who was detained on suspicion of being an illegal immigrant, first at Oldham Police Headquarters and then at Risley Remand Centre.

As professionals who deal with immigration cases, we are all aware of the problem of detention under the immigration laws. However, there are a number of reasons why this case is different from others and why you can help us to win this case. Perhaps also we can help you by sharing with you our experiences of this particular case which has so far met with some success.

Firstly, the case has aroused a lot of public sympathy as he was arrested within twenty four hours of the brutal death of his mother.

Secondly, the concerted efforts of the Bangladesh Association, Abdul Azad Defence Committee, Council for Racial Equality and other interested bodies in arranging protest rallies and meetings have kept the case in the public eye for the past six months.

Thirdly, due to sustained pressure from the Bangladesh Association, the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and his M.P. Michael Meacher, Abdul has been released twice from Risley.

So the Abdul Azad case is different in that through persistent public campaigning we have managed to get the deportation order temporarily lifted. However, the threat of deportation is still there.

The Abdul Azad Defence Committee have decided to circulate details of the

case nationally to call for support in demanding that the order be lifted and that he be allowed to live in peace in Oldham with his family as he has lived for the past five years.

If you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Oldham C.R.E., New Vale House, Greaves Street, Oldham. Tel. 061 624 0505 Ext. 4743.

Yours sincerely,
Janet S Garner,
Assistant Community Relations Officer.

Crisis in St. Vincent

Dear Race Today,

We would like to inform you that our country is in the grip of a National Crisis. On 13 April, our volcano began to erupt and about 15,000 people in the danger zone of the volcano had to be evacuated. They are now camping in over 60 camps in the so-called 'safe areas' of the country.

The majority of the people affected are those resident in the northwestern and northeastern sides of the country, areas of strong support for our Party.

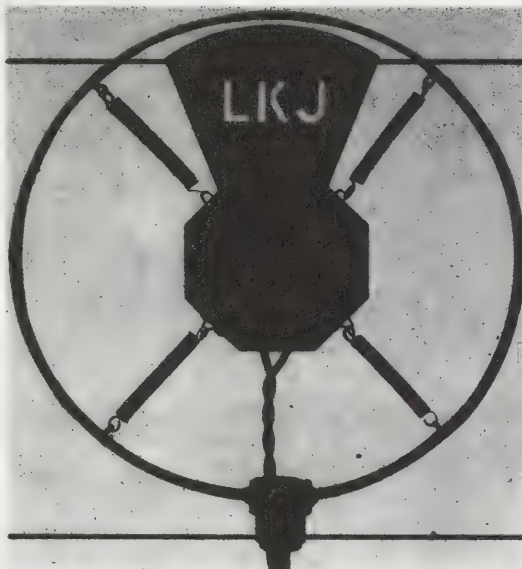
These areas are the most poverty-stricken areas of the country and even in normal times, life is extremely hard for these people. Within this area, homes, animals and crops have already been destroyed and the worst is yet to come. It will take a good time before the people will be able to settle down to normal life again.

At present our Party has almost exhausted all its financial resources in assisting the people from the danger zone. Our Party is therefore appealing to all fraternal parties and organisations to assist us in whatever way they can in this national crisis.

We also believe that it would be good for fraternal parties and organisations to send cables to our Party and the honourable Premier whose address is as follows:

Hon. Premier,
R.M. Cato,
Premier's Office,
Kingstown,
St. Vincent.

Fraternally yours,
Renwick Rose,
General Secretary,
Yulimo,
Kingstown, St. Vincent,



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Race Today April/May '79

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THE GRENADIAN REVOLUTION

In the Backlash columns of this issue, the difficulties facing the Grenada Revolution are articulated by the participants themselves.

Firstly, the Prime Minister, Maurice Bishop, tells us that the government of the United States is dictating to the People's Revolutionary Government that they should seek no aid from Cuba. This has been followed, in the last few days, with an announcement by Prime Minister Bishop that the CIA is organising a three-stage plot against the new regime. The first stage, we are informed, takes the form of subversive propaganda aimed at dissuading tourists from visiting the island, thereby robbing the Grenada Treasury of much needed foreign currency. The second stage will take the form of a series of fires at major public buildings. Already, two such fires have been reported. And finally, leading members of the Peoples Revolutionary Government are to be executed.

This comes as no surprise to those of us here in the United Kingdom who have expressed solidarity and support for the revolutionary overthrow of Gairyism. Any social and political movement in the Caribbean which seeks to break the stranglehold of US imperialism in the region is bound to be faced with the military subversion by the most powerful regime on earth.

Through their Prime Minister, Maurice Bishop, the people of Grenada have given us the lead. They will seek assistance from whichever country offers it and to hell with the USA. That attitude is good enough for us. The Alliance of organisations of which Race Today is a part will continue to mobilise opposition to attempts by the USA and other forces to subvert the process which leads to workers and peasants power in Grenada and the rest of the Caribbean.

Of equal importance is the task of transforming the colonial economy inherited from the Gairy regime. Minister of Labour, Selwyn Strachan, has, in a few short sentences, indicated the needs of the workers and peasants of that country. Those who have been rendered wageless by the colonial nature of the economy are demanding a wage in their thousands. They have literally been besieging the new ministers.

And we are not only speaking about cash in hand at the end of every week. A social wage is being demanded. Free education, medical care, subsidised food and housing are all part of the expectations of Grenada's working class and peasantry. Their social demands are the demands of a modern people.

The producers within the Grenadian economy are without the benefit of modern technology and therefore, as Minister of Finance, Bernard Coard, spells

out, it is hard, back breaking work down the line. In these circumstances the new government can only resort to moral exhortations to produce, to produce, to produce more . . . in order to satisfy the demands of the workers and peasants.

Not that Grenadians and other peoples of the Caribbean haven't got a history of hard back breaking toil and sweat. We have, throughout our history, generated enough wealth through our labour to reduce our working day to near zero. We have, throughout our history, generated enough wealth through our labour to avail ourselves of all the modern technology necessary to free the Caribbean worker and peasant for the fullest development of the human personality.

Alas, that wealth is concentrated in the developed countries of the west and in the hands of a few, protected by a vast military machine. And all the government of the USA would offer is 5,000 dollars for a few projects. Should more be forthcoming then the strings attached are as merciless as the balls and chains of slavery.

In a nutshell, this is the major problem which the revolution faces and from which all other problems spring.

No amount of self help can break this vicious cycle. Not that we deprecate the sterling efforts which Grenadians are likely to perform in these circumstances; not that we deprecate the efforts of Caribbeans abroad who make contributions from their weekly wages to assist particular projects at home. Not at all.

We are saying that we are poised, as never before, to tackle the problem at its roots. Here we are, Caribbeans, in our thousands, residing in the heart of capitalism. Many of us live within a stone's throw of the Bank of England, the City and Parliament. The same applies to our brothers and sisters in North America. We work, some of us, in firms which have grown fat off the sweat and blood of Caribbean peoples.

It is for us abroad to mobilise ourselves and our white working class comrades to demand a return, without strings, of the wealth we have created.

We have to congregate in our thousands at the door of the British and American governments if we are to use our power to release our Grenadian comrades from yet another round of sweat and toil.

The Alliance of the Black Parents Movement, the Black Youth Movement, the Race Today Collective and the Bradford Black Collective is committed to this political task. Enormous though it seems, it is the fundamental historical task of those of us Caribbeans who presently reside abroad.

Race Today Collective, May 1979.

Southall: what is to be done

fashist an di attack
noh baddah worry 'bout dat
fashists on di attack
wi wi' fite dem back
fashists an di attack
den wi wi' countah-attack
fashists an di attack
wi wi' drive dem back

The election campaign of '79 will be remembered for the extra-parliamentary intervention of the black communities of Britain who have in two separate and significant encounters taken to the streets to oppose the presence of the National Front in their areas. On April 23, in Southall, six thousand Asians demonstrated on the streets and attempted to prevent fifty-nine members of the National Front from being imported into Southall under heavy police escort to hold an election 'meeting'. As a result of the clash between the Asian community and the police force, Commander David Helm, in charge of operations that day in Southall, ordered his paramilitary force of four thousand constables to go on the offensive. Members

of the Special Patrol Group, the mobile unit of the Metropolitan police force, clubbed Mr Blair Peach, a white teacher and member of the Anti Nazi League, to death on the pavement in Orchard Avenue, a little distance from the scene of the demonstration proper.

In West Bromwich in Birmingham, where the National Front held another of their meetings a few days later, a mass of predominantly West Indian youth stoned the police who were there in force to protect the free fascist speech of a party which advocates concentration camps and repatriation for blacks within six months of their seizing power. The National Front fielded three hundred candidates in this election. All lost their deposits. By this simple financial manoeuvre they have bought themselves not only free time on the national television networks, but the right to hold election meetings in public halls of their choice. That is the law according to the Representation of the People's Act. The Race Relations Act presumably prevents people from spreading racial hatred, and the Public Order Acts allow the Home Secretary to ban the National Front from doing that which would provoke disorder. Those are all matters of legal debate. What is not a matter for debate is that black

communities will not tolerate the meetings or marches of these hooligans in the heartlands of our territories, the places where we live and work are many.

In Southall, a nominal network of organisations was thrown up to oppose the entry of the Front. The three factions of the Indian Workers Association came together before the meeting was to take place and made representations to the Ealing Council to withdraw permission for Southall Town Hall to be used by the Front. It was clear, at that stage, to police authorities and to the Home Secretary that the Front's meeting was intended as a provocation to the Asian community.

The Front has no support in Southall, and speakers and audience would have to be imported. The Southall Youth Movement didn't make representations to the council. They gathered a hundred supporters early in the afternoon of the 23 and marched down to Southall Town Hall. They were confronted by a force of three thousand police whose Commander was entrusted with orders to see that the Front meeting took place at all costs. The demonstrators, called by the joint IWAs and the Southall Youth Movement occupied the streets leading to the Town Hall. They were driven from them by police equipped with riot shields.

As the hour for the meeting drew closer, the Asian contingents were joined by the Anti-Nazi League which had issued a call to its members to demonstrate in Southall against the Front's presence. The fury and numbers of the Asian demonstrators forced the Anti-Nazi League for the first time to demonstrate in solidarity with a local black community which had gathered under its own leadership and was pushing its antagonism to the protectors of the Front, the police, as far as disorganised antagonism can be pushed. Three hundred demonstrators, most of them local residents, a very large number of them Asians, were arrested. Thirty police went to hospital.

The National Front's meeting took place. By six-thirty, the scheduled hour, David Helm had ordered his men on the offensive. He had unleashed the mounted units at his disposal and ordered the Special Patrol Group into the fray. According to four witnesses, two of whom



were on the Anti-Nazi demonstration with Blair Peach, and two of whom were Asian bystanders who had not joined the demonstration, three men from the SPG accosted Peach in a side street while he was on his way home and bludgeoned him into semi-consciousness. Mr Atwal, one of the witnesses, said that he helped Blair Peach into his house and called an ambulance. Hours later Peach died.

On the Saturday following his murder, a demonstration in his memory again took to the streets of Southall. Again the Asian population of the area was the significant force, declaring on their banners that Peach will be remembered as a martyr alongside Gurdip Singh Chaggar who was killed by racists in Southall in 1976.

With the black community entering the fray as an independent force, the perspective which the Anti-Nazi League has not clearly or uniformly espoused, becomes a reality. If the state chooses to defend the avowed, politically organised racists, then the forces of the state will face increasing assaults from the black community. According to Vishnu Sharma, President of the Indian Workers Association, the Asians of Southall have finally experienced the police state in operation. From their actions,



organised antagonism into a sustained political fight must be informed by the balance of political forces in the struggle.

This is our assesment: From John O'Groats to Lands End, one will hardly find blacks whose attention has not been drawn to the events of Southall. Hardly will we find blacks who, through their own experiences in events like the Notting Hill Carnival, let's say, are not mortally opposed to what the

police did on the streets of Southall.

There is enough evidence to show, that a vast reservoir of support and sympathy for our struggles exists in our countries of origin — the Asian sub-continent, Africa and the Caribbean.

We have, in the course of our resistance to oppression and exploitation in Britain, drawn considerable attention from blacks in North America.

These are the forces at our disposal, which we need to weld into a fighting



it certainly seems that the Southall Youth Movement knew that opposing the presence of the Front meant fighting the police. However, neither they nor the Indian Workers Association, independent black organisations though they are, have issued any satisfactory means of launching a political fight against police brutality.

That is certainly what has to be done. And the task cannot be accomplished simply by voicing a barrage of complaints against the brutality of the police at the Southall demo. Of course, complaints are in order, but they become tedious, though, if not at once accompanied by what is to be done about them.

Any attempt to transform the dis-



force to further the struggle against the police which reached a sharp point on the streets of Southall.

And how can we do it? We are for a public enquiry and must say at once that we are opposed to the kind of independent enquiry proposed by IWA notable, Vishnu Sharma.

Sharma has called for a public enquiry, sponsored by the Labour Movement. We say no. Why can't the enquiry be sponsored by the Southall Youth Movement? After all, they did the fighting and they took the blows. The task of organising an enquiry of this sort will develop the Southall Youth Movement, an independent black organisation, by leaps and bounds. To look outside Southall for sponsorship is to retain a colonial mentality with the consequence of denigrating all that exists there at present, thereby contributing to its demise.

Who shall enquire? Sharma has chosen the following: a legal respectable, a member of the Commission for Racial Equality (our colonial office) and other personages of that sort. We strongly disagree.

Why not members of the Asian and West Indian working classes who have been tried and tested in the organisation of our mass struggles over the last 30 years?

Why not members of the international black working classes who have led and organised struggles for working class liberation in the Caribbean, the Asian sub-continent and North America?

Such a choice of enquirers will focus the international black working class on our struggles in Britain as never before. To look to the colonial bourgeoisie for enquirers is to undermine the black international working class movement whose vibrancy can be felt in every corner of the globe.

Finally, we do not object, one iota, to a minority representation from the white working class community. We are sure that the Irish liberation struggle would not decline an invitation, nor would representatives of the coal miners.

Evidence need not only be confined to the Southall events. We can draw on the experiences of those of us who were at the Notting Hill Carnival 1977 at which Commander Helm led his fascist forces. Supporting evidence could be drawn from experiences as far away as Leeds, Manchester, Bradford and West Bromwich, all areas which have experienced the brutality of saturation policing.

We, in Race Today, believe that such a political move is on the order of the day and a firm necessity if we are to break out of the deadlock of spirited but disorganised antagonism to police brutality.

On the morning of Thursday, March 8, 1979, the Principal Officer at Preston Prison interrupted George Lindo's game of chess with his cell-mate. Lindo was taken down for an interview with the Assistant Governor who informed him that he was granted bail by the Court of Appeal.

It was the end of an ordeal, beginning in the cells of Bradford's Tyrls Police Station, through a Crown Court trial, then to prisons at Armley, Strangeways and Preston.

Defence Counsel for George Lindo has alleged that he was framed by Detective Sergeant Craven, and Detective Constables Brierley and Jackson. George was arrested on August 5, 1977 and charged with the armed robbery of a betting shop. The sum alleged to have been stolen was £67.

He contended, from the beginning, that the statement made by him admitting the robbery was given under duress.

George Lindo was forced to sign, on the dotted line,

a statement which was wholly and completely manufactured by the officers.

The judge at George's trial was petitioned by the defence to rule that the statement be excluded from the trial, because it was obtained by force. Had the judge ruled in favour of the petition, the case against Lindo would have collapsed. It was the only hard evidence connecting Lindo to the crime.

After hearing the evidence from Lindo and the police officers, the judge ruled that the statement was properly taken and should be admitted.

George was subsequently found guilty and sentenced to two years imprisonment.

From the day Judge Bennett sentenced Lindo to prison, a systematic campaign, led by the George Lindo Action Committee in Bradford, was set in motion, principally to secure George's freedom.

And now victory is in sight, for the granting of bail ensures a successful appeal against conviction and sentence. The Appeal Court, as a matter of policy, never grants bail to a prisoner convicted at a Crown Court unless success on appeal is assured.

Indeed, at the bail application on the morning of March 8, the British state was seen and heard to be urging the court to grant bail to the man they had imprisoned thirteen months before, unconditional bail pending appeal at that — no sureties, no restrictions, none whatever. Two days before the bail application on March 6, George's solicitors received a

telephone call from the Department of Public Prosecutions regarding his case. There was nothing unusual to be seen in this act. After all, George was due to have his appeal heard on March 12 and the DPP, probably in the light of the vigorous Free Lindo campaign had decided to take the case out of the hands of the West Yorkshire police. What was most unusual, however, was the content of the telephone call. George's solicitors were stunned to hear the DPP representative urging them to apply for bail for George.

Now, here was a complete about face.

At the Appeal Court, on March 8, the drama unfolded in the chambers of Lord Justice Frederick Horace Lawton. The DPP was represented by a Mr Louis Blom-Cooper QC. He made two applications. The first was for the portion of the trial transcript that deals with what is known as the 'trial within a trial'. This refers to the moment in George's trial, behind the backs of the jury, when Judge Bennett the presiding judge, rejected arguments on the admissibility of the statement of confession.

The second application, made by Blom-Cooper, was for an adjournment of George's appeal which had been fixed for 12 March.

Both applications were granted.

Then, on behalf of George Lindo, barrister Marguerite Russell made an application for bail pending the appeal. Mr Blom-Cooper stated that, not only did he have no objection to the application, he urged the court to grant it without conditions. The application was granted and the information was duly transmitted to the Governor at Preston Prison.

Back at Preston Prison, George was on his way to see the Governor. He should have had no idea of the news that was about to be broken to him. Was he being summoned for some alleged breach of prison discipline? He was mindful of the fact that, while he was at Armley Prison, Leeds, the prison officers there had attempted to frame him on a charge of trying to escape. They were not successful but George must have believed they would not relent in their attempts to harass him.

Let George describe what happened next:

"So he (the prison officer) took me to this office and there the A.G. (Assistant Governor) says to me, 'Have you got an appeal in? So I said, 'Yes'. And he then said, 'You've been granted bail. We have to let you

FREE GEORGE LINDO



go now so go and pack your things.' I was speechless. When I went back to my cell and told my pad mate he didn't believe me. Anyway, I started to pack my things. The prison officers were running about getting papers for me to sign. They gave me a wage of 60p, a grant of £13.90, a train warrant and 20p bus fare. In less than fifteen minutes, I was out."

George's freedom from prison was a startling development and has added a new lease of life to the George Lindo Action Committee which has agitated, demonstrated and campaigned for his release. What had turned sour in the state's conspiracy to imprison him which now forced it to concede to his release from prison on unconditional bail?

GLAC has always argued and maintained that, central to George's arrest and conviction, is the corruption and malpractice of the Bradford police force and a willingness of the courts to rubber stamp the evidence of the police. It is now certain that two of the police officers responsible for framing George Lindo face disgrace. One, Detective Constable Brierley, who was responsible for coercing George into signing the statement of confession, either resigned or was suspended from the police force in September, 1978. The reason? He was discovered by a Home Office investigation to have taken other statements improperly from other defendants. In short, this means that he was forcing other inno-

cent people, like George Lindo, to admit to crimes they had nothing to do with.

One of the other detectives involved is likely to face charges arising out of the Elliot case .

The Elliot case came to light just two days after George was sentenced to two years imprisonment. It concerned the case of a young man named Geoffrey Elliot who, at the same Tyrls police station, confessed under pressure to committing a rape. Then just as the case was to come to court, another man admitted that he carried out the rape. Elliot was freed and in the wake of the ensuing scandal a Home Office enquiry was instigated. George's appeal will be heard on June 8 at the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand. We are told that the DPP will provide George's solicitors with a written note giving evidence of Brearley's malpractices which should completely vindicate George Lindo. Already, the basis has been laid for a mass picket at the Royal Courts of Justice on the day of the appeal hearing. A rally was organised by the Action Committee on April 8. The rally was called to inform supporters of the stage the campaign had reached and to mobilise them for the next.

The rally was held at the headquarters of the Bradford West Indian Community Association at the Textile Hall. It was attended by some 200 people. From London, Race Today travelled by coach with members of the Black Parents Movement, the Black Youth Movement and other friends and supporters. Supporters also came from Hull, Manchester and Liverpool. The programme of the day was organised around political and cultural events and was chaired by Darcus Howe, editor of Race Today and Chairman of GLAC

First to address the meeting was George Lindo himself. He recalled the events leading to his arrest and framing by the Bradford police and he thanked those present for their support and for their efforts to secure his freedom. Next to speak was Carol Lindo, George's wife, and she described the emotional and financial nightmare of the preceding 13 months of George's imprisonment. Then, messages of solidarity and pledges of continued support were read out to the meeting from organisations which have been part of the campaign to free George — from Race Today, the BPM, the BYM and the Black Students Association in Hull.

Courtney Hay, editor of Bradford Black and member of the GLAC, described his organisation's political intervention in the George Lindo case and how the campaign had developed. He informed the rally that the next stage of the campaign is to win a victory at the

Appeal Court and financial compensation from the state for the imprisonment and humiliation that George and his family have had to undergo. Furthermore, GLAC itself and not the state will decide on what is a suitable figure of compensation.

Following his speech, Darcus asked the rally to pledge its continued support for the demands of GLAC and for the Bradford blacks in their struggles against the police. Unanimous support was pledged.

The second half of the programme was given over to cultural events. First was reggae poet and Race Today activist, Linton Johnson. One of the most significant contributions to the campaign was a reggae poem, written by him and recorded on his album 'Poet and The

Roots' and dedicated to George Lindo. It was called, 'It Dread Inna Ingran' and demanded of the British state, 'bettah free him now'.

Next were two young sisters from the Lindo family who sang several songs. The rally was to have seen 'Dread, Beat an' Blood', a film about Linton Johnson but due to a fault in the copy, we saw instead 'The Harder They Come', a film about the life of the unemployed youth in Jamaica. Finally, the rally culminated in a dance accompanied by the sound system of Kamanda Sounds.

It is a fact that the Bradford police will not take their defeat without retribution. Two recent examples illustrate this. On the day of George's release from prison, the police went to his home and accused a young girl who is a friend of

George's wife, of stealing a social security cheque. She was taken to the Tyrls, despite her denials and, under duress confessed. While she was still at the station, another woman admitted that she in fact was the culprit. Even more recently, George's brother-in-law visited the Bradford West Indian Community Association and was held up by the police. They ripped his shirt and wanted to charge him for burglary but didn't.

It is clear, therefore, that while we celebrate the freedom of George Lindo we, and in particular the Bradford black community, must continue to be vigilant against the inevitable corrupt counter-offensive by the Bradford police. Victory to GLAC!

Barbara Beese
Race Today Collective

VICTORY FOR THE BRIXTON YOUTH

For three months, young blacks in Brixton occupied their local youth club, 'Sheppards'. The occupation began on Thursday February 8, 1979 in response to an attempt by the club's landlords, the Railton Methodist Church Council and the Inner London Education Authority to close the club and disperse the staff. The occupation ended on Wednesday, May 2, when the Methodist Church Council accepted the demand that the club remain open.

It was a victory for the all-black membership of the club, organised and disciplined by the Railton Youth Club Action Committee.

The battle began on the morning of Thursday February 8, when the Rev Graham Kent, accompanied by police officers, changed the lock on the door of the Railton Community Centre which houses the youth club. He declared the club closed to the five hundred members bringing to an abrupt end a fifteen year history of youth activities.

Almost simultaneously, officials of the Inner London Education Authority, the state institution which finances the salaries of youth workers, appeared at the club with a suspension order for the youth leader, Mr Ivan Madray, and dispersal notices for the rest of the staff.

The membership had no idea that the closure was on the order of the day, neither did the club's management committee. No one except the Methodist Council and the ILEA knew the whys or wherefores. There has been some speculation that a policy exists, in the higher

echelons of the Methodist Youth Club organisation, to close down black youth clubs in the inner city areas.

It was clear enough, though, to the club members that both the Methodist Association of Youth Clubs and the ILEA had forged a conspiracy to deprive young blacks of much needed leisure activities.

The young black members responded. They seized the premises, declared the slogan 'Railton Belongs To Us' and launched a public campaign to win their club back. Under the leadership of the Railton Youth Club Action Committee, the members demanded the immediate reinstatement of the youth leader, Ivan Madray; immediate revocation of the decision to disperse the part-time staff and the formation of an ad hoc committee with representation from the membership, to formulate proposals for a new constitution.

To give weight to their demands, the Action Committee picketed the headquarters of the Methodist Church, organised a mass rally at the club, mobilised scores of messages of solidarity, won support from groups locally and nationally and kept up a constant barrage of media propaganda.

In the course of the struggle, a history of constant conflict, between the Methodist Church Council and the club's youth leader, emerged. The Methodist minister and his predecessor sought to dominate the club and all its activities. No independent initiative was to be allowed. A grant of £100,000 from Urban Aid to the club brought howls of protest from Rev

Graham Kent. New initiatives were blocked or frustrated. Minority white colonial rule had to prevail.

It is in this atmosphere that the suspension of the youth leader was cooked up and the decision taken to close the club.

Once the confrontation came, only the independent mobilisation of the membership could save the day. Madray withdrew from the sit-in on the orders of the ILEA. He was threatened with the sack if he remained part of the resistance. He took his case to the Industrial Tribunal who ordered that the ILEA take the complaints to the Club's Management Committee before any disciplinary enquiry could be held.

Sections of the Methodist Church Council wanted to heighten the confrontation. They were for calling in the police and kicking out the blacks. Wiser councils prevailed. Concessions were negotiated with the Management Committee. The club would be re-opened and the staff retained. Only Madray's case had been left outstanding. His decision to withdraw from the sit-in on the orders of the ILEA made his isolation complete. He could no longer be included in the package.

The club is now open under the leadership of his wife, Greta Madray and the stage is set for the formulation of a new constitution. Throughout the three month period of struggle, the middle class, professional management committee retreated to their hiding places. They have disqualified themselves by their absence from the scene of battle from holding any office of responsibility.

The youth and their parents, drawn from the black working class, must now step forward to take the reins of power. They have proven themselves in the heat of the struggle and the responsibility of government must rest with them.

Forward to a new constitution.
Forward to youth and parent power.

St Vincent on the way to freedom

The successful seizure of power by the New Jewel Movement in Grenada has given added strength to the working class, the peasantry and the organised revolutionary currents in all Caribbean countries.

St. Vincent is Grenada's closest neighbour and there exists, in that country, a restless population on the verge of a social explosion.

Mike Browne, President of the St. Vincent Union of Teachers and a member of the central committee of the Yulou Liberation Movement, describes, in an interview with 'Race Today', the present history of workers and peasants struggles and the political direction of his organisation.

Give us some idea of the struggles that have been going on in St. Vincent from, say, the early 1970's to today?

The struggles in St. Vincent must be seen in their inter-connection with international events. In other words, St. Vincent does not exist in isolation from regional and international forces. Regionally, the progressive movement in St. Vincent, in Yulou, has been influenced by developments within the region such as, of course, the immediate effects of the black power revolution in Trinidad, in 1970, the growing influence of the Cuban revolution in the region, to name a couple. Of course, there exist trade union and progressive struggles throughout the

The economy of St. Vincent is weak. It has been historically exploited and plundered. The plundering of the economy is being intensified with the growing penetration of imperialist concerns. As a result, the economy is unable to meet the growing aspirations and needs of the Vincentian people, with the result that there has developed the contradiction between the demands of the mass of the people on the one hand and those who control the economy, namely foreign interests and the local bourgeoisie on the

gether, comprising youths, male youths by and large, but also women and very often unemployed. This is essentially the composition but we didn't have the broad mass movement.

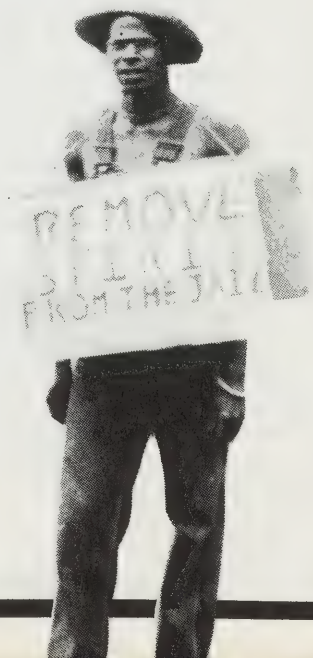
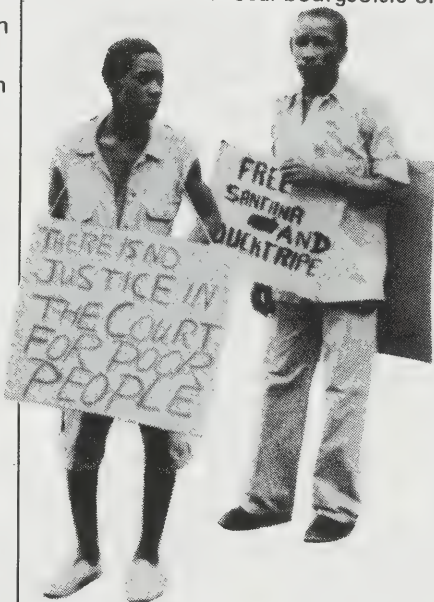
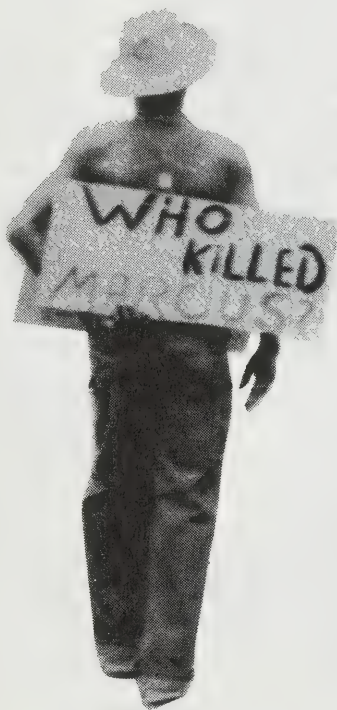
The unemployed constituted part of these organisations but the organisations also comprised working people. The unemployed youths continue to be part of the on going struggle. In fact, in growing numbers, they are coming forward under the progressive banner of Yulimo today, largely because there is no future within the present context and they perceive their future, and I think rightly so, as being with a Party such as Yulimo which intends to transform the capitalist economy into a socialist one.

What was the reaction of the government of the day to the black power movement of the 70's?

The government at the time was the Labour Party government and, as you know, you have a number of the so-called Labour Party governments in the Caribbean, labour in name but anti-labour in ideology and action. Their response was very reactionary, very vicious.

other. It is out of this struggle, influenced by national and international events, that a lot of organisations came into being. Did you have a black power movement in St. Vincent in the early 70's and what sections of the population were involved in that?

We didn't have a movement in the sense of a broad organised mass front of people. There were small groups, such as the Organisation for Black Cultural Awareness, which was formed in 1971, and the Black Liberation Action Committee in 1972. You had some of the most progressive sections of the community coming to-



Caribbean region. These have been affecting the development of the struggle at home. But within the country itself, the inner dynamics of the economy were catapulting people into the forefront and, in a sense, escalating the struggle.

There was a beefing-up of existing repressive legislation. There was, for example, in the period following the 1970 uprising in Trinidad, the beefing-up and implementation of the Emergency Powers Act, which literally gives the government excessive sweeping powers. Of course, when they have combined that with the provisions made in the State of Constitution 1969 for a state of emergency, you have given the government a dread weapon. And this is significant and relevant today, because, with the crisis at home with the volcano, they can always declare a State of Emergency.

In addition, there was the notorious Public Service Amendments Act in 1971, which effectively prohibited public servants from participating publicly on political questions or what could be deemed by the authorities to be political questions. So this effectively closed out the intelligentsia, who are employed by government, from articulating the needs of the people and coming to their defence. In fact, it continues to hamper our struggles today, so that many public workers, even though they identify with our progressive movement and are in fact part of Yulimo, cannot be brought to the forefront on a political platform. It is a very, very vicious piece of legislation. That is just an example on the legislative plane of what has taken place.

Militarily, there was a tremendous beefing-up of the police force and repressive machinery of the government, and coercion through institutions which they control.

Your Attorney General was assassinated in 1973. As a result, the police murdered a young man and charged two others with murder. What happened to the two defendants involved in that incident?

Two of them were captured alive, Junior 'Spirit' Cottle and Blackie Laidlow. The third comrade, Marcus James, allegedly committed suicide. What is interesting to note is that the first jury to try the case passed a verdict that it was not suicide, which meant that he had been killed, most likely by the police. However, that was appealed and the second jury indicated it was in fact suicide and the case was dropped, although I have been hearing very repeatedly about a particular police officer who was alleged to have shot him. The other two comrades were kept in jail and, in 1976, they won their appeal. The less politically oriented one was released. The more politically dangerous one to the establishment was re-arrested on trumped-up charges, as far as we are concerned, and he is currently serving a 15 year sentence.

That's Junior 'Spirit' Cottle?

he's still in jail.

that a sporadic attempt at guerilla

warfare?

Well the circumstances are still not clear. **The next moment for us in Britain, when St. Vincent comes to the forefront, is with the nurses' strike in 1975, followed by the teachers' strike a few months later. Could you indicate to us what those two strikes were about?**

The nurses' struggle was not a strike. In August 1975, a crisis developed at the hospital around the surgeon who was unilaterally removed by the Labour Party government which had won the elections several months before. The particular surgeon in question had a certain affinity with one of the opposition parties. So it appeared that it was a case of victimisation. The nurses responded spontaneously by giving their support. But the question must not be seen as a narrow issue of this particular surgeon being fired. Rather, it must be seen as a catalyst within the Health Service.

The economy was and is unable to come up with the funds to provide proper medical services, as well as education and social services. There was and still is a drastic shortage of essentials at the hospital and this frustrated the nurses. Many appeals to have the situation rectified fell on deaf ears and hence, this formed the material context out of which the situation erupted. So we must be clear, in looking back, that we do not define that particular struggle as a narrow issue around a particular person they fired, but seeing it, in effect, as a broader issue within the Health Service. The outcome was that a number of nurses were suspended, indicted and so on, many were charged in the courts. But with increasing pressure from the teachers' strike, which came shortly afterwards, the government capitulated and they dropped the charges and people were reinstated.

However, as a follow-up to that, what has happened in the subsequent years, up 'til now, is that there has been the mass movement of nurses out of the country. So the medical services and the profession suffered a tremendous set-back as a result of this vicious response of the Cato regime.

Could you go on now to the teachers' struggle?

In a sense, the two are inter-connected because the teachers, in the early part of the nurses' struggle, spread the umbrella of the union over the nurses and gave solidarity and assistance. In fact, one of the most significant activities, following the demonstration of the nurses in August, was also a spontaneous march by the teachers at a general meeting in September when the nurses were invited to present their case to the general membership of teachers. And out of that you had a march of easily about a

thousand people.

Then the teachers had their own independent struggle, developing around the same time, and a strike was called as the result of the failure of government to hold a dialogue on five key questions: working conditions retroactive payment of 750 dollars, salary increases, a collective agreement, because we did not have a collective agreement and, fifthly, repeal of the same Public Service Act which I have mentioned. That struggle was fundamentally an economic struggle on the salaries, conditions, collective agreement, and so on. But in dealing with the Public Service Act, it had that political dimension to it. And this is important because it is part of the philosophical approach of the new leadership of the teachers union to link the trade union struggle to the broader political struggle.

You talk about a new leadership. That means there was an old leadership which I think you ought to describe. How did the new one come into being?

Prior to 1975, the union was essentially an association, a professional association, even though it was called a union. In other words it had the structure of a professional association. Teachers felt they were professionals rather than workers. That underscored a number of other things. The organisation was not grievance oriented, the organisation did not have records, the organisation was restricted in terms of its political activity. The dues were a ridiculous 25 cents a month. A general secretary was seen more in terms of writing proper letters than anything else. Funds were spent more in terms of cocktail parties. There were two strikes previous to the 1975 strike, in 1956 and 1961. They were very narrow and restricted strikes, politically motivated by the opposition party.

Could you outline the transformation from association to union?

Well the transformation took place in 1975 when I was voted in as president of the union, and there were some other progressive comrades and democratic teachers on the executive. We sought immediately to get in contact with the rank and file to articulate the views and the interests of the teachers. We moved immediately to get an office so that we could keep records. The political input came at around this time. We campaigned to get full time officials which ultimately we won. Basically, these are some of the areas of transformation.

Could you go on now to describe the struggle as it developed?

In November, the strike was called due to government's failure to discuss the five areas that I have outlined. It was extremely effective. Initially, we estimated that

75% to 80% of the teachers were out. And it was important because struggle always helps to educate you politically.

In the past, teachers considered themselves as a special social elite, white collar, and thought of unions and demonstrations and pickets in the hot sun as part of the struggle for the banana workers and the dock workers. Now, they themselves, began to engage in this very important form of political activity.

And it's part of the whole process of practical political education which has transformed the union and a number of teachers. The response of the regime was vicious.

Could you give us some examples?

Well, first of all the government used the national radio to threaten us. There were threats to the families of teachers, that if we didn't go back to work we would lose our jobs. They used parents to pressure their children to return to work. They used political connections as well. It reached a point where the whole thing escalated at the end of the second week of the strike when there was a sit-in at the Ministry of Education. Some 30 odd teachers, including some sisters, were arrested. Some were thrown

in the jail before bail was arranged that same afternoon. The following day there was a massive demonstration. It was in fact a people's demonstration.

There were thousands of people in the demonstration involving workers and students. The march was brought to a halt by the police and ten persons, including some executive members, were arrested and the march was broken up with tear gas and police batons. The entire town was brutalised. Within minutes of the disruption, there was a mass rally in Kingstown of over 5000 people. A number of us were kept in jail for three nights, the entire weekend, because they didn't want to put us back on the streets on Friday for fear of escalation of developments. A number of court cases followed, victimisation in the form of transfers, loss of pay and dismissals.

The teachers acquired a lot of experience in this kind of struggle. Even though they were very heroic and courageous, we had to return to school. It was in a sense a tactical retreat because the balance of forces had shifted against us. And this is important because whenever public employees are locked in a struggle with their employer, it is not the same as with a private employer. The employer here hap-

pens to be the government with an arsenal of machinery of all types to bring down on the strikers. And we learned that from hard experience. However, since then we have waged, in a sense, although maintaining a trade union struggle, a sort of political guerilla warfare which has been very instrumental in organising support for the movement against the government.

Now, it must be pointed out that in all these struggles, our party, Yulimo, has played a very central role. It must be borne in mind that many of the cadres in the union at leadership level, national, branch and others were Yulimo cadres. We were called upon to give that sort of practical political direction during this time, and the party organisationally provided a lot of support. Because, as teachers, we were prevented from articulating our position publicly. The party had to do it for us, not only through the publication but at public meetings.

What happened to the original demands of the strike?

Some of them were subsequently met in a very compromised manner. There was some improvement in working conditions because the government, which was saying it didn't have money, suddenly found money to put in a number of desks and benches. This rectified some of the shortcomings in the education system regarding material things. We received a back pay, but it was heavily taxed. We received a salary increase recently, but it was a token increase. We wrote the government and I understand the government has recently responded on the question of collective agreement. They are willing to discuss it. I believe it's because the elections are coming up and they want to make some capital. They have not touched the fifth demand for a repeal of the Public Service Act.

What were the responses of parents and school children to the struggle?

We had a lot of support from children. Many children refused to attend school even when some schools were open. A section of parents responded very well. Some were motivated politically by the opposition party, some motivated, in fact, because they were concerned with the conditions in the schools. However, there was a sizeable section of parents who were still clinging to the Labour Party, so that was the distribution of support among parents.

Apart from those two major activities, the nurses and the teachers, have there been any other major struggles waged by workers?

Not on that scale. There have been struggles in the form of work stoppages, there have been struggles in the form of short strikes involving less people, there have



Spirit Cottle and Blackie Laidlow, charged with murdering the Attorney General in 1974, seen here leaving court.

been spontaneous actions such as peasants' demonstrations, farmers' demonstrations for better prices for their produce and so on. Agricultural workers have been up in arms spontaneously but not on that major scale.

What is the quality of trade union representation for banana workers, dock workers and other workers in St. Vincent?

That's a difficult question. First of all there is representation and the workers do get some concessions. The union in question is the Commercial Technical and Allied Workers Union. The leadership has a tendency to be somewhat compromising on a number of important questions, including wages. There are some members of the executive who are known Labour Party people, so this contributes to that compromising attitude. They subscribe to the trade union strategy of class collaboration as distinct from the trade union strategy of class struggle. The teachers union believes in class struggle. We are not going to hold hands with the people who employ us. There is this tendency within this particular union. So we do not believe that the banana workers and the dock workers get what they should truly get.

Is there any rebellion within those areas against the union leadership?

There is some resistance, some dissatisfaction but it is not organised.

Your organisation, Yulimo, announced, in 1975, the launching of a trade union youth movement organising all workers between 14 and 35. What happened to that?

It was an attempt of course to educate youths politically towards trade unionism, because the country doesn't have trade union education as part of the school curriculum. So it was meant to orientate young people towards trade unionism. It fizzled out.

As part of the Party's work, we not only operate in existing trade unions, but we have formed the National Progressive Workers' Union, which is organising essentially among agricultural workers. We are also trying to make inroads in the industrial estate at Campbell Park, like at the flour mill for example. That has been developing rapidly since it was formed in '76, but it is having the problem of the usual lack of resources because of the sporadic contributions from the agricultural workers who themselves get very low wages.

The Party also has formed a youth arm which has scored many successes. The launching was very successful with a number of the youths coming forward. Basically, it seeks to pull in democratic youths, progressive-oriented youths who are not really ready to be within the structure of the party and do not have

the discipline for the work of the party but who can be trained. It is called Vanguard Youth.

We have also formed the Women's Democratic Organisation because of the problems of mobilising sisters for a number of reasons which I think are known; the societal constraints on women and the chauvinism in the society.

Could you tell us about the condition of the domestic workers in St. Vincent and if your women's arm is doing anything about it?

Their condition is drastic. They receive very low wages. I don't recall the figures just now. I remember, once, when I had made some calculations for a presentation in Toronto, it worked out that certain categories of domestic workers were receiving something like six Canadian cents per hour. The wages have recently been revised. Although the wage has now gone up, the implementation is something else. The employers are still not subscribing to it. The domestics work very long hours for little pay and, very importantly, as happens to a number of unemployed sisters in the society, they are exploited sexually by their employers or potential employers. Their condition is a grave one and certainly we hope the Women's Democratic Organisation will do a lot of work among these sisters.

The agricultural female workers are also an important category. Not only do they work on the estates, but they have to come home to work to maintain the family. We are trying to focus on their problems to see how the WDO can assist them in organising.

Could you briefly tell us about the distribution of land in St. Vincent and the reaction of peasants to this redistribution?

Land distribution wasn't radically transformed at the end of slavery. Essentially, the planter class continued to own the

land, the large estates and so on and even up to today that pattern has not changed. The government is also part of the ownership of these estates alongside some of the old planter class families. The largest and most productive estate is privately owned. Bananas account for over half of the exports. The other crops are ginger, carrots, potatoes and so on.

The peasantry emerged in the post slavery period because a number of people, instead of working for the limited wages on the estates, moved up to the mountains to plots of land. So you had the peasantry and small farmers emerging and they have been very, very productive particularly in terms of things like ground provision, carrots and ginger and these sorts of things. They are neglected essentially by the government and they suffer a lot.

In the latest budget, the government imposed a 3% tax on agricultural commodities and hence it hit the small farmers as well. Notwithstanding the fact peasants have acquired some land up in the mountains which, in any case, is very inaccessible, there's a great land hunger in the country. This is reflected in the seizure of an estate in the post 1974 period. As an election gimmick, the Premier at the time in 1974, Mitchell, acquired an estate from an old planter class family, Hadley, costing over half a million dollars. He didn't have a plan for it but he did it as an election gimmick. However, in the '75/'76 period, many of the peasants in the area seized the land. They simply cut areas. And there is an extremely productive area now. This is the general pattern. There was an attempt to seize land again on the other side of the coast. So, land hunger is a characteristic of the country.

Now, you have talked a lot about Yulimo and there is also, to our knowledge, another organisation called Arwee. Could you tell us about the development and history of both as they have emerged as forces in Vincentian politics?

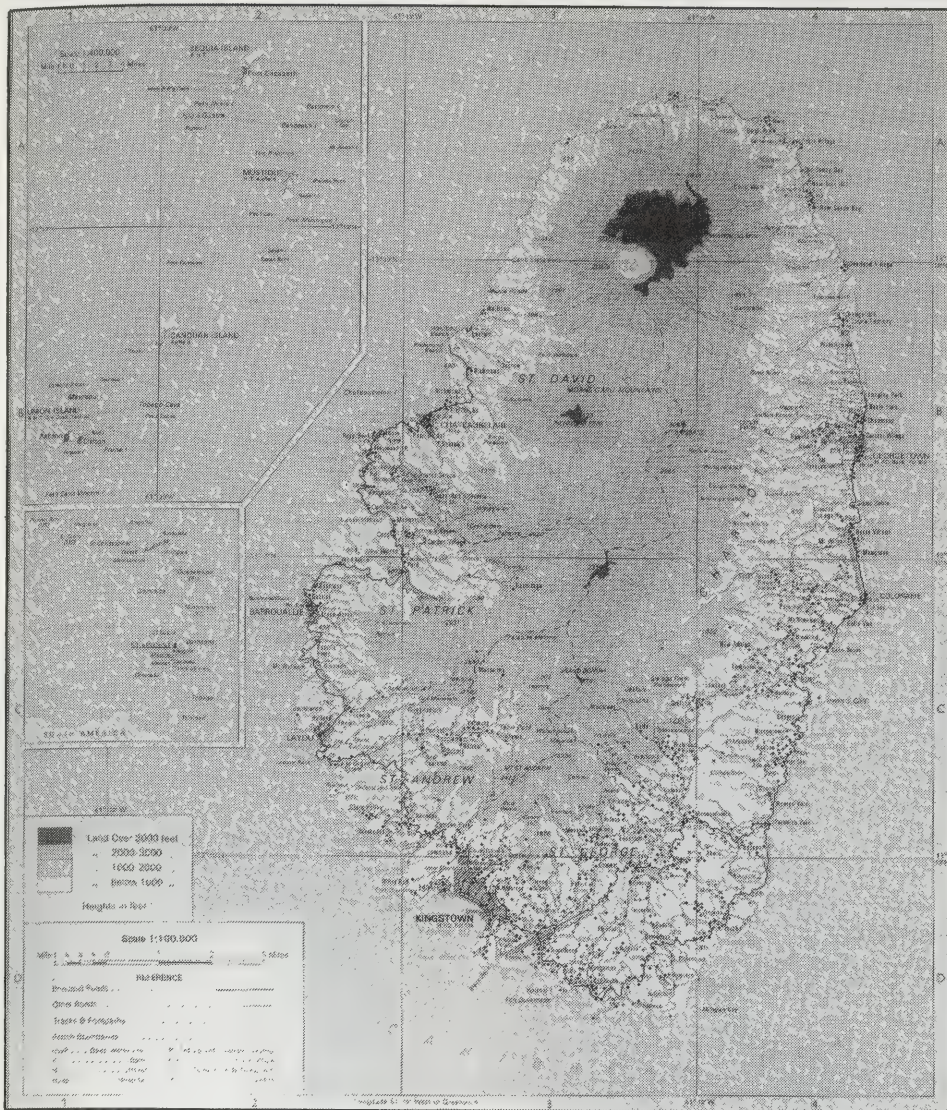
Arwee came out of a small group of brothers and sisters in a village called Diamond. It was initially very loose, but recently they are attempting to structure it. There are some definitely progressive comrades and it is a progressive organisation, anti imperialist, socialist oriented. They have marxist-leninist tendencies within the organisation. Because of these tendencies and its progressive position, we are currently trying to work out an alliance with these comrades. So we have on going discussions.

What are the issues they take up from Diamond?

Things like control of the land in the area by certain big shots, also marketing for produce and actual agricultural produc-



Mike Brown addressing a meeting in London



tion. Political education of the masses, the absence of it is marked in the countryside. They also take up very overt political questions, such as independence, as part of the anti-imperialist struggle. They are not restricted in terms of issues to the particular locality or to the peasantry.

Before you go further, could you tell us what foreign penetration there is in St. Vincent?

First of all, in the financial sector, the banks dominate the country. You have, of course, Barclays Bank which now has four additional branches besides the main one. In 1977, it opened a new branch, very well organised, well built, well run, right in the middle of Kingstown and it has two other branches in the Grenadines and one in Georgetown. Then you have the Canadian banks like the Royal Bank of Canada, which is now expanding, and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce which is doing the same thing. In 1977, you had the entry of the Scotia Bank from Canada. In addition to this, you have some 200 of what you call off-shore banks which are registered in St. Vincent, and which is used by a number of mafia and criminal type elements to

launder the money, and from which point a number of bogus cheques are issued.

What does the government do about these mafia people?

Well, they encourage them because they have created a tax free haven and they are encouraged to come in. They simply pay a little fee to a lawyer and a fee to the government and they are allowed to set up an office and headquarters.

Indeed, there is an article which recently came out in the Wall Street Journal, a very good piece of investigative journalism, which showed the connection between these banks in St. Vincent and mafia and criminal elements.

Also in the finance section, you have the foreign insurance companies, the main one being British American. The effects of these on the economy can be seen from a Caribbean Development Bank Report for 1977, which indicated that, in that year, the foreign banks alone shipped out 5.7 million dollars. The insurance companies, it is estimated, shipped out 2 million dollars in that year. The figures may not seem large in absolute terms, but then you must see it relative to the economy and the budget. For ex-

ample, the budget for 1978/1979 was 62 million dollars. For the previous period it was less than that. I think it was 48 or 49. I can't remember the figure. But when you deal with 8 million dollars being shipped out by these foreign financial concerns, it's a serious question.

We are also up against British concerns in the country, such as Cable & Wireless and the Caribbean Development Corporation which deals with electricity which is a rip off of the people. You have Canadians coming in the form of Maple Leaf Flour Mill. Now they call it the Craven Flour Mill but the Maple Leaf company of Canada has 40% of the shares in this mill.

What about agriculture?

No, not in the area of agriculture. Geest doesn't have any estates but of course they have the monopoly for shipping bananas and the farmers of course get a bad deal on this question. Bananas are sold to Geest via the Banana Association. **Could you now go on to develop the history of Yulimo and its political position?**

Yulimo came out of the merger of the left organisations in the country, two of which I mentioned before, the Organisation for Black Cultural Awareness and Black Liberation Action Committee, the third being The Young Socialist Group. The Young Socialist Group had marxist tendencies as distinct from the other two organisations which were black nationalist in their orientation. Following the assassination of the Attorney General in '73, there was much repression and the groups began to see their differences may not have been so great after all, because the state perceived all of them to be the same. So there was greater emphasis on similarities rather than differences, although differences were also recognised. So during '73, these three organisations had unity meetings leading to the complete merger in February 1974. The party was launched on August 1, 1974 with our paper 'Freedom'. We chose August 1 because, historically, it's Emancipation Day.

Shortly after, we had the collapse of the Mitchell government when Joshua and his wife crossed over to the Labour Party side and brought down the government. So the country was split and plunged into a political crisis and we had our baptism of fire. In short, over the years we have had to grow up very quickly. You could say that we had to walk before we could crawl. I think the comrades in the organisation stood up to the test tremendously. Ideologically, we were under transformation because, at the time of the merger, the dominant tendency was the black nationalist one, but we found, in terms of our situation, in prac-

tical struggle, we found the tools of analysis employed by marxism/leninism very helpful in understanding the political economy and understanding the political forces and the class representation within the society. So more and more as we struggled practically, we began to use these tools, so much so that in August '75 at our first anniversary, we had so much ingrained marxist/leninist analysis that we formerly declared marxism/leninism to be our ideological position.

Does your party have parliamentary aspirations? Are you going to contest the next election?

We see the electoral struggle as a path that could be employed. This does not close out other alternatives. We make that absolutely clear, because we must be prepared to struggle on any and all fronts and using whatever means are available. In St. Vincent, we don't have the history of the blatant rigging of elections. So it is a process that could be employed for mobilisation of the masses to taking power. The channel is still open so we intend to utilise it. In the event that the channel becomes closed, as has happened in the case of Grenada, it's obvious we'll have to look for alternatives.

We have been very successful in electoral work. We have put out a minimum programme, ten thousand copies, and circulated it widely in the society so people are familiar with what we are talking about. The programme, it should be pointed out is not a socialist programme because like everything under the sun, you have to move in stages and the transition from capitalism to socialism will also operate in stages. You can't, for example, build socialism in a country like ours where 75-80% of the youths have never worked, where 50% of the working class is unemployed, where it is estimated that 30-50% of the population is illiterate. There has to be a transition period where you educate the people and develop the discipline of working people before you reach to socialism. You also have to strive for industrial development and so on. We have some leftists who may look at it and say 'all you sell out', but we understand you have to move in stages. So the programme is a socially oriented programme. Socialism will be built at a later stage.

In addition to the minimum programme, we have conducted numerous political meetings. We have also put out a number of publications to aid the electoral struggle. Within the mass organisations in which we are functioning, we orient them more and more towards the political area and the elections because, ultimately, they have to take a position on the elections. So by and large, this is part

of the work.

Internationally, it should be mentioned that we have also established support groups in New York, Toronto, Ottawa, and London, assisting us in our electoral campaign and providing some financial assistance. Not much, because they haven't got much anyway. But the whole election programme has been disrupted, as you know, with the crisis with the volcano.

Tell us about the crisis. What effect has it had on St. Vincent?

A tremendous effect. First of all in terms of the economy it has suffered enormously. The volcano exists at the top of the island and at the foot of the volcano, on both sides, you find two of the country's most productive estates which have been completely obliterated. On the Eastern coast, it's mainly coconuts, and coconuts form the basis for animal feeds and cooking oil, so you have that chain reaction. Recently, they were unable to ship bananas, and bearing in mind that bananas form over half the exports, you could understand the impact on the economy. A lot of the infrastructure has been damaged, roads and a couple of the hydro stations have been damaged. You have, also, the dislocation of all the social services. Education is in a shambles. It was in a shambles before but now it is in more of a shambles. The medical situation has been disrupted. People have lost all their possessions, their animals and so on. Psychologically, needless to say, it has dislocated so many people. It could never be the same again.

We understand, too, that given the ongoing eruptions, the scientists say the situation would become worse with each eruption, and that has been proved in the present situation. There is a fleeing from the country of a number of people who could move out, so I think the country is going to lose a lot of its trained personnel because the trained personnel are, by and large, from the middle strata and they have the wherewithal to get out. They have relatives abroad, which means that the mass of the poor and suffering people will be left to deal with the situation at home. So the effects are very far-reaching. It would take years to reconstruct the economy. Politically, there are also implications. The elections possibly will be postponed. The election campaign and so on has been disrupted. So it's a serious set-back.

Could you advise Vincentians what to do, should they want to make contributions to non-governmental bodies?

In discussing the volcano situation with comrades in New York and Canada, there is a reluctance to send certain things through the government, especially money. This lack of confidence in the

government is not without foundation because people have seen the government in operation and corruption of the political parties. What we have done is to set up, through the teachers union in St. Vincent, a fund at the National Commercial Bank, and any person who is willing to channel funds, not through the government, could feel free to do so. Naturally, we would prefer if things were organised and centralised and go through the government. We are not trying to organise a splinter situation, but we know this fear exists and we're simply providing an alternative for people who feel strong about it to send through the funds. Within the union, we intend naturally to publish all the receipts that come in from the bank and keep strict records on how the money is spent. It should be addressed to the Teachers Union Emergency Fund. The number is 2979, National Commercial Bank of St. Vincent.

Mike, you talked earlier about Grenada in describing the development of Yulimo and your political practice. Could you tell us what kind of response you had, first of all, from the working class and the general population of St. Vincent to events in Grenada?

It was a welcome development. Everybody (and we are the closest of the territories to Grenada) in the country was fully aware of what was taking place in Grenada in terms of the repression, undermining of democratic rights and there was tremendous hostility towards the Gairy government. So when the news of the overthrow came, it was received with joy on the streets in St. Vincent. People were saying 'yes' it has happened in Grenada. They were talking very much about Grenada, but many of them also thought it's St. Vincent because they see many similarities in the St. Vincent situation.

Did you have any rallies and public meetings in support of the Grenada revolution? Immediately, a number of cables were sent off to the new government by a number of organisations; political, trade unions, youth organisations and so on indicating solidarity. On the Friday, we had a rally in the market square which drew quite a crowd. We read the statements of support and a resolution was passed. On Sunday 25, the day which was declared the Caribbean day of solidarity with Grenada, there was a massive rally in the Georgetown area and again a resolution was passed including among other things, condemning the W.I.S.A. statement. So, we can safely say that the Grenada revolution received strong support from the Vincentian masses.

However, the ruling circles panicked, naturally. They panicked because it revealed the vulnerability of some of the

governments. They panicked because of the surgical efficiency with which the thing was executed in Grenada. They were really shaken. In fact, the day after the revolution, two of the criminals from the previous Gairy government, Derek Knight and Henry Bullen, escaped and arrived in Grenadines. This was on Wednesday, and on Thursday, they came to St. Vincent, to the airport. They were given VIP treatment by Mr Hudson Tannis, Deputy Premier, and Mr Milton Cato, the Premier and leader of the Labour Party. Further to this, the Cato government banned the local radio station from carrying any news coverage on the Grenada situation and, in a very ludicrous way, they also banned the DJs from playing what they called revolutionary sounds; Bob Marley, Peter

Tosh and so on and progressive calypsoes. It became a laugh, not only in St. Vincent, but throughout the Caribbean because of the stupidity and the hysterical reaction of the government. But this reaction is, of course, not surprising because they know they have been doing a number of things the Gairy government had been doing. They know of the close ties between the New Jewel Movement and Yulimo. In 1976, the Cato government had prevented Maurice Bishop from coming in when he was to represent Junior 'Spirit' Cottle. As you know the government also became part of that notorious W.I.S.A. statement.

Could you break that statement down?

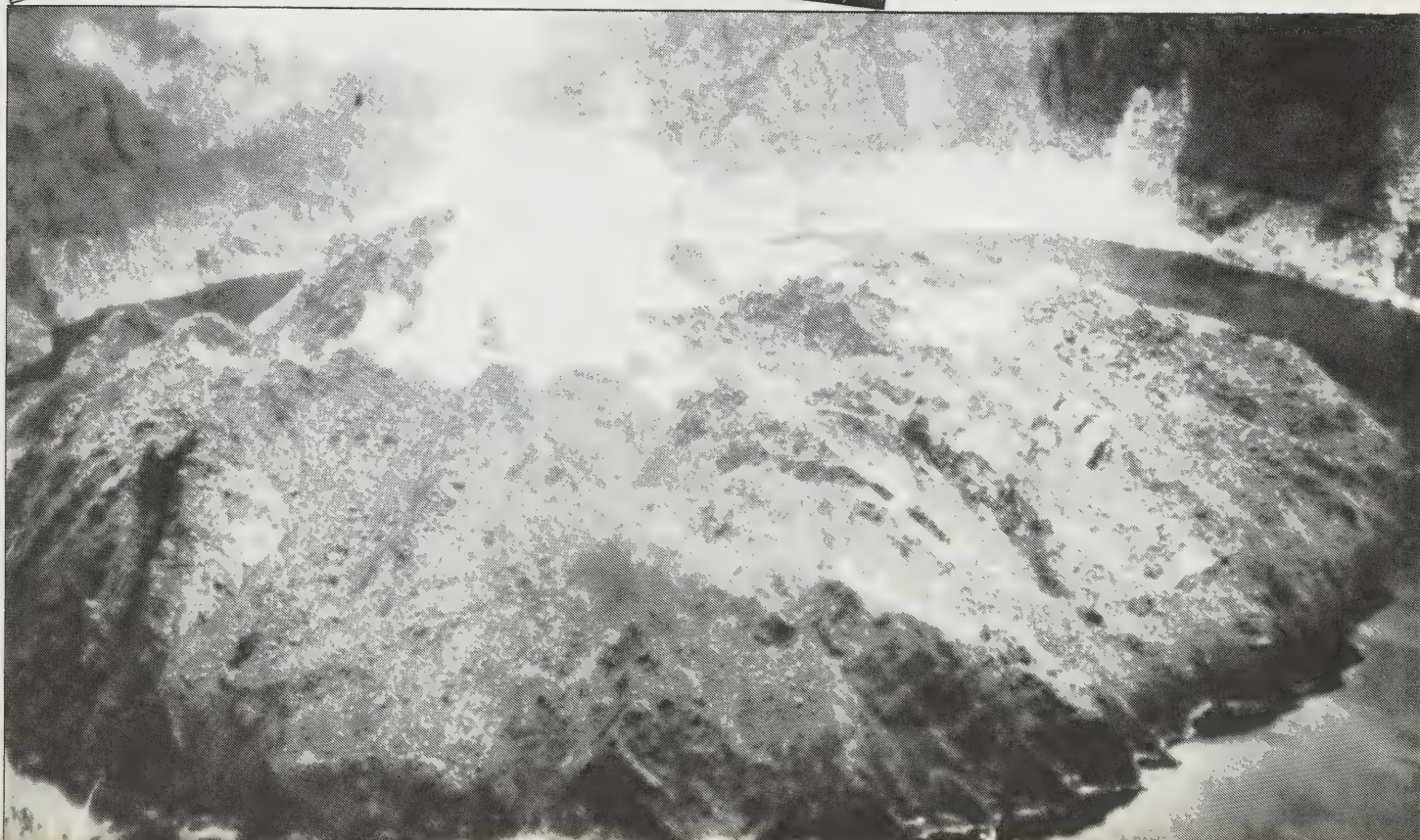
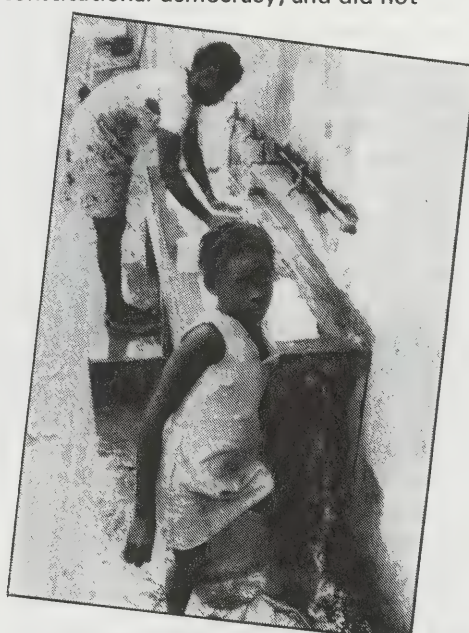
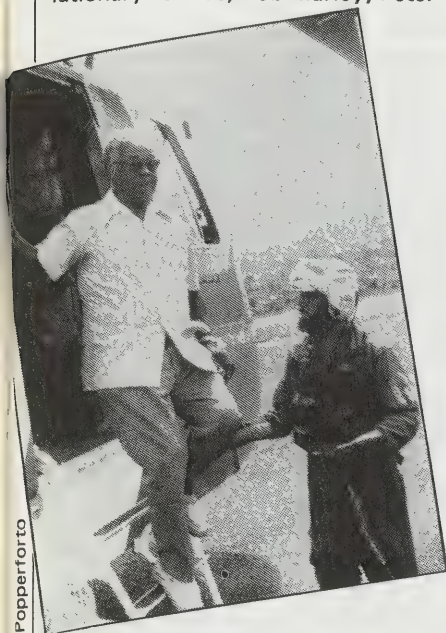
Well, in short, the governments involved state that they subscribe to democracy, constitutional democracy, and did not

look kindly on any attempts at violently overthrowing any government in the area and, as a precaution to protecting themselves, they would set up a Regional Security force, which means that anything that could be deemed or interpreted as threatening the constitutionality of any country, could lead to the intervention a number of troops from the states who sign this agreement.

Which are the states involved?

The areas represented at the meeting were St. Kitts-Nevis, Montserrat, Antigua, **Dominica**, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent. You also had the Eastern Caribbean Currency Authority represented. You had representation from Barbados, and the Civil Aviation authorities. These were the forces represented at that meeting. May I add, on the Grenada situation, that it was recently reported to us that Gairy was being harboured in Union Island just before the eruption took place. I received, in Toronto, a telephone call on Tuesday to indicate that Gairy was reported to be in Union Island and it was reported also that two boat loads from the People's Revolutionary Army in Grenada went over to get him. The Premier of Grenada, Maurice Bishop, denied this as being accurate. The reports that Gairy was in Union Island were very strong so we see this is as very dangerous development but not an unexpected one given Cato's actions on the question.

Milton Cato, Premier of St. Vincent on a tour of the disaster areas. Women and Child clean up outside a disaster relocation centre in Kingstown, St. Vincent.



BACKLASH

QUOTES FROM THE GRENADA REVOLUTION

Maurice Bishop,
Prime Minister.

Excerpts from Radio broadcast of April 13 1979.

In his [the US Ambassador, Frank Ortiz] official meetings with Minister of Finance, Brother Bernard Coard, and then with me, on Tuesday of this week, and also in his unofficial discussions with a leading comrade of our Peoples Revolutionary Army, at Pearl Airport on Wednesday morning, the Ambassador stressed the fact that his government will view with great displeasure the developments of any relations between our country and Cuba. The Ambassador pointed out that his country was the richest, freest and most generous country in the world but, as he put it, 'we have two sides'. We understood that to mean that the other side he was referring to was the side which stamped on freedom and democracy whenever the American government felt that their interests were being threatened. People are panicky and he would have to report that fact to my government, he advised us. However, the only evidence of panic which was given by the Ambassador was an incident which took place last Monday, when the Peoples Revolutionary Army, as a result of not having been forewarned, shot at a plane which flew low, very low, more than once over Camp Butler. The Ambassador calls that panic. We, and the people of Grenada, call that alertness.

At the end of our discussions on Tuesday, the Ambassador handed me a typed statement of his instructions from his government to be given to the Peoples Revolutionary Government. The relevant section of that statement reads, quote: "Although my government recognises your concerns over allegations of a possible counter-coup, it also believes that it would not be in Grenada's best interest to seek assistance from a country such as Cuba to forestall such an attack. We would view with displeasure any tendency on the part of Grenada to develop closer ties with Cuba".

It is well established internationally, sisters and brothers, that all independent countries have a full, free and unhindered right to conduct their own internal affairs. We do not, therefore recognise

any right in or out of the United States of America, to instruct us on who we may develop relations with and who we may not. From the first day of our revolution, we have striven to have and to develop the closest and friendliest relations with the United States as well as Canada, Britain and all our Caribbean neighbours, whether English, French, Dutch or Spanish speaking. And, we intend to continue to strive for these relations. But no one must misunderstand our friendliness as an excuse for rudeness and meddling in our affairs, and no one, no matter how mighty and powerful they are, will be permitted to dictate to the government and people of Grenada, who we can have friendly relations with and what kind of relations we must have with other countries.

From the second day of our revolution, during our first meeting with American government representatives in Grenada, we were at great pains to emphasise the deplorable and ravished state in which the Gairy dictatorship had left our economy and country. We pointed out, then, that massive assistance, technical and financial, would be required in order to begin the long process of rebuilding the economy. The American Consul General told us that he was not surprised to hear this. He assured us that he would encourage his government to give us the necessary assistance, particularly, he said, as he had been so impressed by the bloodless character and the obvious and self evident humanity of our revolution, and there were prompt assurances in the first hours of the revolution that the safety, the lives and the property of Americans and other foreign residents were guaranteed. Indeed, he freely admitted that the American residents had all reported to him that they were happy, comfortable and secure. However, one month later, no such aid has arrived. It is true, and we want to point this out in the interests of fairness, that the Ambassador did point out to us, and correctly so, that his government generally granted aid on a multi-lateral basis through the Caribbean Development Bank. He also said that his government did prefer to maintain that approach rather than to help directly despite his admission that red tape and bureaucratic delays could cause substantial delays of up to one year in receiving such multi-lateral aid. It is also true, and we again wish to point it out, that the American Ambassador advised us that his government is monitoring Gairy's movement and that it was against

American law for Gairy to attempt to recruit mercenaries in America. This, of course, we appreciate. However, we must point out, that the fact is that in place of the massive economic aid and assistance that seems forthcoming, the only aid that the American Ambassador has been able to guarantee that he could get to Grenada, in a reasonably short period of time, would be 5,000 dollars, US for each of a few small projects. Sisters and brothers, what kind of aid could the United States 5,000 dollars do? Our hospitals are without medicine, without sheets, without pillowcases and proper equipment. Our schools are falling down. Most of our rural villages are in urgent need of water, electricity health clinics and decent housing. Half of the people in our country who are able to and would like to work are unable to find jobs. Four out of every five women are forced to stay at home or to scrimp for a meagre existence. 5,000 dollars cannot build a house or a school or a health clinic. We feel forced to ask whether the paltry sum of a few thousand dollars US is all that the wealthiest country in the world can offer to a poor but proud people who are fighting for democracy, for dignity and self respect based on real and independent economic development.

..... The American Ambassador is taking very lightly what we genuinely believe to be a real danger facing our country. Contrary to what anyone else may think, we know that the dictator, Gairy, is right now organising mercenaries to attack Grenada in order to restore him to his throne. We know the man Gairy. Nobody knows him better than we the people of Grenada.

It is, sisters and brothers, in these circumstances, and because we have an undoubted right to defend our people, our sovereignty and our freedom, that we call on the Americans, the Canadians, the British, our fellow countries in CARICOM like Guyana and Jamaica, Venezuela and in Cuba to assist us with arms. And we reject entirely the argument of the American Ambassador that we would only be entitled to call upon the Cubans to come to our assistance after mercenaries have landed and commenced their attack. Quite frankly, and with the greatest respect to the American Ambassador, a more ridiculous argument can hardly be imagined. It is like asking a man to wait until his house is burning before he leaves to buy a fire extinguisher. No, we intend, if possible, to provide ourselves

with a fire extinguisher before the fire starts, and if the government of Cuba is willing to offer us that assistance, we will be more than happy to receive it.

Bernard Coard,
Minister of Finance, Trade and Planning.
Excerpts from Public address at Belle Vue,
St. Davids, April 22, 1979.

Sisters and brothers, as we also told you from the very first rally in Queen's Park, and we have repeated at every one of the rallies, it is not possible, given the devastated nature of the economy, given that we have inherited a barren treasury, we have inherited a situation of bad roads, non-existent hospitals, school buildings falling down, half the people out of work, it is not possible to rebuild the society overnight. It is not possible for a handful of ministers, no matter how popular they might be with the people, to do it on their own. It is only the people themselves, by organising and through our collective hard work that can reconstruct this country, and we must be aware of that. We must recognise that. In other words, if anybody believes that manna is going to fall from heaven in the skies and overnight all the problems of 30 years of Gairyism will be solved by next week or next month then it means you're still dreaming. You will have to wake up.

Because there is only one way, and that is you have to produce more. We have to produce more on the land, we have to produce more in the factory, we have to build more factories as well. We have to catch more fish, because right now half the fish that we eat we import it in tins of this and tins of that. A tremendous amount of the food that we eat including half a million dollars worth of onions, imagine onions, we are importing onions into Grenada. We ain't have shame? Onions we bringing into Grenada, peanuts, all kinds of things like that. We have to start producing and that is why Brother Eunison Whiteman spoke to you about the emergency, the national emergency food plan. For the workers and farmers of this country to seriously buckle down to producing so that we can feed ourselves, so that we can ease the pressure of the balance of payment, so that we can have the incomes for the farmers and the workers of this country to live a better life.

And all of this can come, the new and just society can come but it can come only one way, and that is we have to work hard. But we have to continue to ensure that when we work hard the fruits of our labour come back to those who labour and not into the hands of a handful of parasites. That is extremely important. And so, sisters and brothers, I want to end on that note; on the note that we have to buckle down, that we have to work hard, that the revolution

has only just begun. The overthrow of Gairy was only round one, we have 14 rounds to go. Let us move into round two and lick that one down, and then move to round three and down the line. We must remember that. Only round one has been won. The building of the new society, the development of the economy the improvement of the living and working standards of the people, those are the next rounds in the battle that faces us. Forward to victory, forward to the revolution and long live the revolution of the people of Grenada. Forward to the people of St. Davids, and the people of Grenada, and good evening.

Selwyn Strachan,
Minister of Communications, Works and Labour.

Message given to Alliance representative on
April 23, 1979.

Permit me, on behalf of the Peoples Revolutionary Government, the Peoples Revolutionary Army and the working people of Grenada to express firmest and deepest solidarity with the Alliance of the Black Parents Movement, the Black Youth Movement, the Bradford Black Collective and the Race Today Collective of England. I would also like to express solidarity with Grenadians living in England and West Indians as a whole who have in some way or the other supported the Grenada revolution. We are fully appreciative of the contribution that the Alliance has given so far in our struggle.

Since the March 13 revolution, we have been noting, with keen interest, the varying contributions that this organisation has offered to the struggle on this side. This, of course, we feel has gone a long way in helping to consolidate the revolutionary gains that we have made so far.

It is important to note that the economy of our country has been totally and completely destroyed by Gairy and Gairyism. It therefore means that in order to bring back any form of sanity to this country, lots of help will be needed by friendly nations and friendly people throughout the world. We have a situation in Grenada where 50% of the workforce can't find work, not that they do not want to work, not that they are prepared to stay home and idle. They are looking for work every day but cannot find work. This is just one example of the state of the economy. We know that for a fact because, from the time we took office a little over a month ago, literally thousands of people have flooded the different ministries asking for jobs. Obviously, this is something we cannot solve right away, but we are trying our best. In the area of health we also need assistance. The hospital is in a terrible state. There is a chronic shortage of drugs. There is also a shortage of doctors throughout the

country, so much so that people are not properly attended from a medical standpoint. We would like to let you the people of the Alliance and the people of England who are West Indians as a whole to know that the task of building this economy is not an easy one. The sacrifice and struggle that will be asked of the Grenadian people will not be an easy one because we have to start from scratch. The corruption that has been created by the Gairy regime is very, very massive indeed, and this will take a great deal of time to wipe out.

I want to highlight one aspect of the corruption that I have discovered in my ministry, and I must let you know that I am in charge of the Ministry of Communications, Works and Labour. It is to do with the loan which was made possible by the Caribbean Development Bank to the government of Grenada a few years ago to build thirty miles of feeder road for our small farmers in Grenada. That loan was approved by the Caribbean Development Bank in 1975. A loan of 3.7 million dollars to construct as I said, thirty miles of feeder road, which were supposed to have been completed in two years. After the end of two years, only six miles of road were completed and 2 million dollars disappeared without trace. This is just a small example of the kind of corruption that we have to deal with. Of course, there is corruption throughout, and if we were to put all these different bits and pieces together, you will find that a special book of corruption of the Gairy regime in Grenada would be created.

As far as we of the Peoples Revolutionary Government are concerned, we are determined to push this country forward. We know that the people of the country are willing and ready to push this country forward and to defend the gains we have made so far in the revolution. Throughout the country the people are vigilant. They are ready to deal with any group or groups who are thinking in terms of subverting the revolution. Freedom has come to this country and the people of our country have tasted freedom. Something that has been denied them for the longest while. And, in that context, we are prepared to die to defend that freedom.

In conclusion, we would like once again to salute you the people and you the members of the Alliance, and to give you the assurance that as far as the Peoples Revolutionary Government is concerned, we will continue to develop and maintain closer ties with your organisation because, as we see it, your organisation is an organisation that has a commitment towards the upliftment of the poor and dispossessed peoples in the countries of the third world. A position which we firmly support. So, once again, we thank you for your assistance and for your continued success in your very fruitful work in England.

The Black Writer In Britain

by Farrukh Dhondy

Farrukh Dhondy, member of the Race Today Collective and a south London teacher, has distinguished himself as a popular writer of children's books.

In his article, *The Black Writer in Britain*, Farrukh Dhondy traces the literary influences in his formative years in India, and the social and political milieu in Britain which has shaped his writing.

When I did begin to read English, I read what generations of British schoolteachers, booksellers and makers of opinion had established as good reading for colonials. My mother was literate and literary. My father read newspapers and was good on history, Indian and otherwise. I read Enid Blyton and then Kipling and all the comics, mostly American, that I could lay my hands on.

When I was six, I lived in Madras and remember the bookshop called Higginbothams. It was the first place I knew that smelt of books, the first place to cast the enchantment of print and covers and browsing on me. Every time I was taken there, I pestered whoever was taking me to buy me a comic and, together with my sister, who was by much the stronger pestering force, built up a collection of 'Classics Illustrated'. The adults who happened to be in the vicinity of Higginbothams with us probably thought that we might as well read the classics in comic form if we were going to read comics anyway. They didn't approve of Gabby Hayes, Hopalong Cassidy, Roy Rogers and Lash Larue with his

black cocked hat, sadistic whip and gangster lips.

At that age I couldn't read the Classics I collected. I culled the story from the pictures and by asking my sister. I knew the stories of 'Wuthering Heights', 'Lorna Doone', 'Ivanhoe' and the rest before I was eleven, without ever knowing who wrote them, why or when. (As a schoolteacher in Britain, I've often looked for these comics for use as a teaching aid, but haven't found them). When we could, my sister and I got away from the Classics diet and read the American funnies.

English comics I couldn't stand or understand. They seemed to be full of healthy heroes and moral endings. Even British adventure books, apart from the ones by Enid Blyton, especially the ones written for boys, didn't get me where it counted. I remember winning a book called 'Biggles Hits The Trail' as a prize for being good at maths or something. I liked the book because it had a certificate in its frontispiece saying I was the greatest, but of the story I could make head nor tail. I was puzzled by the plot and by the way the characters talked more bizzare to me than the dialogue of Mickey and Minny Mouse. I recall my imagination's struggle with that book every time I watch a James Bond movie nowadays and can't quite make out who is doing what to whom and why. Is James Bond really a sophistication of the Biggles fantasy, or have I hit upon a classification which tells you why I am pathetically impregnable to their mysteries?

Kipling enchanted me in my later adolescence because he wrote about India. One of the most powerful appeals of literature is that it makes you aware of what you already know. Recognition is all. That was the appeal of 'Kim', even though I lived a thousand or more miles from the North West Frontier or from the bazaars of Lucknow. It was the appeal of 'A Passage to India', even though Aziz and Godbole had passed away with my great grandfather's generation. 'The Plain Tales From The Hills' and 'Passage' itself suggested to me, or first suggested to me that stories were most powerful and engaging when they tackled the encounter, the insoluble encounter between races and classes, between white and brown, between rulers who weren't rulers in the end and ruled who weren't ruled.

That was the mood in which I discovered, in my totally haphazard reading, without benefit of a sixth form teacher, the writing of Lawrence Durrell and his purple encounters with Arabs and the Mediterraneans with whom I instantly identified. I read the 'Alexandria Quartet' in paperback on the tram to the chemical engineering college in Bombay. I got so

involved with it that I missed my lectures for a few weeks and stayed in the tram, reading and re-reading the sacred texts from one tram terminus to the other, with a two-way ticket tucked between the pages of the dictionary on my lap. It made me want to write. Made me feel that if only I could learn all those hard words and look up a few more, I would be ideally placed to supply the waiting world with the next encounter between Englishness and an exotic setting, my own, which Mr Durrell could know nothing of. I even found myself hoping that Lawrence Durrell, whoever he was, had found fame and fortune enough to prevent him from leaving Alexandria and buying a ticket to India, familiarising himself with the place, writing about it and so stealing my destiny. I knew it was a fanciful destiny, but I seriously thought of getting down to work. My only problem was that I didn't know any Englishmen.

Some fashion of Bombay told me that Durrell was unfashionable, a passion of the immature, a talent which was supremely irrelevant to the past, present and future of the people I met every day who incessantly talked of food, money, jobs, difficulties, politics. When I ran away from engineering college, and after a year found myself back in Poona, where I had been to school and college before, my taste in reading had changed and with it my impression of what writing ought to be about. Albert Camus in translation, the poems of Yevgeny Yevtushenko, the muddle of Kafka who seemed to force the reader to do most of the work, seemed so much easier to write. All the writer had to do was get hold of a pen and some paper and suffer. The pen and paper were there, and the bewildering millions of Bombay remind-





ed one constantly that not passing exams and not getting a job would plunge one into an abyss in which suffering was easy.

It was impressed on me that the firmest step away from the abyss was a 'foreign qualification'. A certificate from a university abroad was a life insurance policy second only to family money, and family money was so easily squandered, had been time and again so easily lost. Not so the piece of paper which said that you were a graduate of the 'University of South Dakota', or that 'Patrice

Lumumba University' in Russia had made you a Bachelor of the fraternity of third-world job-worthiness. It was English Literature, some books, I should say that made me choose Cambridge rather than Texas or Lumumba. It was hard work on differential equations and question spotting on the Physics papers that got me a scholarship.

I forgot about writing. My father told me it was something I should do when I had the time. The mid-sixties taught me something else. At university in Britain, writers and writing are a serious game. It was my job, when I switched from doing Natural Sciences to doing English, to write essays and assignments on books and writers. By the time I was in that game, it was an established orthodoxy that the writer was only understood when you understood the social background in which he or she wrote. It was one step, but a long one from that orthodoxy to the new one. The new pronounced that all writing, whatever its purpose, was innately political.

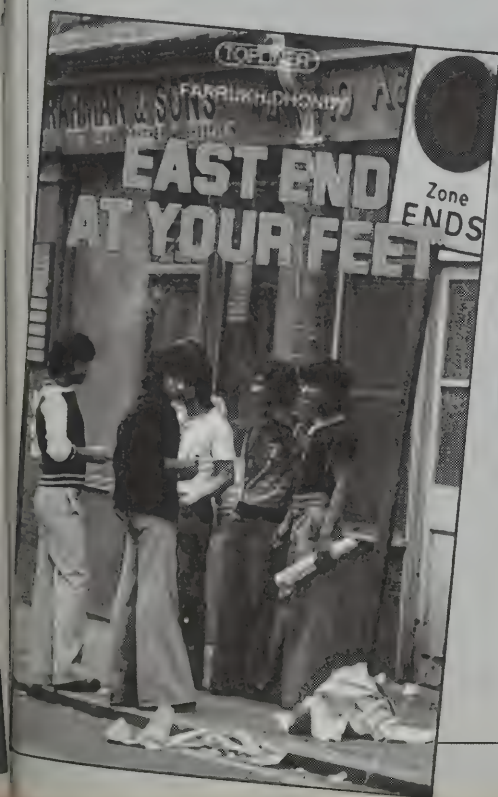
I think it was an uneducated conviction. You could win applause in these circles by saying "all literature is class literature," and win all manner of abuse by professing to like a book because its story was unusual or that Shakespeare had an understanding which was valuable as understanding. When this line of thinking progressed, it reached the idea that doing was good and writing was second-hand. It wasn't a climate that encouraged anyone to write. Which was not perhaps

a bad thing because, in the undergraduate circles in which these homilies were chopped, no-one really had anything to say.

I won't trace here the process by which I found myself, after two universities, in London and in the Black Panther Movement. I'd already been a member of the Indian Workers' Association in Leicester and had, for the first time, after being in England for four years, entered the political movement of Britain's Asian working class. At the time, the movement was a demonstrative one. It didn't envisage having writers or any form of cultural platform built out of the life of Asians here. It didn't envisage even the sort of writing that makes James Baldwin and Richard Wright essential influences from and on black America. It certainly didn't encourage the emergence of voices like Le Roi Jones, Eldridge Cleaver, George Jackson, though even in Asian organisations, as distinct from West Indian ones, the message of these writers had a vogue.

The Indian Workers Association gave us, who were in it at the time, the feeling of doing rather than pronouncing. We marched through the centre of Leicester, protesting against the shameful Kenyan Asian Bill which James Callaghan and Harold Wilson had whipped through the Commons. We mis-spelt Callaghan's name on our placards and shouted 'Chulla-ghun Hai Hai', which slogan wishes Callaghan a sticky end in Hindi (a prophecy?). We demonstrated against Enoch Powell, most of us calling him 'pole', that being the favoured Punjabi pronunciation. We broke up showings of a film called 'Green Beret' because we were concerned about Vietnam. We gathered in a suburban pub outside Leicester one fine evening, two hundred Asian workers trying in vain to look incognito, with pints of beer, to break up a meeting of the Anti-Immigration Organisation. The population of Leicester didn't understand our placards and our slogans, but they sure as hell knew what we were on about.

In Leicester, and through the IWA, writing didn't seem important. To the official IWA, it still doesn't. 'Culture' is confined to tradition. In the Black Panther Movement in London, the discussion began again. There were several young West Indians in the Movement who wanted to write and actually did. Most of them kept it a secret, because the leadership of the Movement had never seen the political growth of which we were all a part, as the establishment of blacks, culturally and politically in Britain. The leadership growled now and then about writing having to serve the masses. The Movement was part of an important political explosion in Britain, but its ideological crisis was that it had not clarified what its service to the masses ought to be. The



poems and short stories, if they were being written (and there is plenty of evidence now that they were) were talked about sotto voce or kept in the drawer at home or used publicly elsewhere with a quick look over the shoulder to see if the leadership got to know and pounce to denounce. From the ranks of that Movement, and from its demise, there emerged at least one West Indian poet and one West Indian political writer who have since made their mark and exercised to full measure talents which the early Black Power movement suppressed.

Needless to say, the Movement didn't encourage me to write. I did some of it on the sly, writing articles for Indian newspapers. In the ranks of the leadership, the certified intellectuals, with degrees and so on, were suspect. And rightly so, because the late sixties and early seventies were producing, in Britain, a class of the same certified intellectuals who used their certificates and savoir faire to hustle jobs and positions in the Community Relations Industry, and in the echelons of the controlling institutions which channelled the energies of the black population. We were throwing up a bureaucratic middle class and writing and its purpose came under careful surveillance.

That was, if not a problem, at least an inhibition. What of the poets and the others who wished to write? They got together a small semi-clandestine group and managed to hold a few meetings in which they exchanged their work, until they were disbanded by frowns which seemed to say that selling a newspaper for the organisation was more important to the development of the black community than bringing talent into the writing which the newspaper published.

Partly because of the attitude it took to black creativity, the black power era was a short episode in the history of blacks in this country. A community does not live by rhetoric alone. I write about it, not because it was the most important, but because it happened and I was there. Some of the writers, who broke with the Movement, and divorced themselves from the development of the political community, later produced works about black suffering or black nostalgia. One or two, such as Gus John, produced sociological works with vigour and guts. The political writer and the poet I've mentioned above, participated in the next episode of black development in which I've been involved, and that didn't happen by happenstance.

I began working for 'Race Today' when Darcus Howe, the political writer, who had seized the editorship of the magazine, invited me to write about blacks and schools in the second issue he edited. I wrote that piece, and, for a couple of

years after that, continued to contribute to the journal which was knitting itself through the ideas expressed in it, into a collective. The journal addressed itself to the blacks in this country and those who would support first their independent thought and then their independent activation. It sought to make its writers into activist journalists. Out of the journal came the organisation called the Race Today Collective which said, to me at least, write what you must, we'll judge you, assess you, but we won't stop you. The organisation pushed me to write, forced me to find out and write about people and areas I wouldn't have come to of my own sweet will. Sometimes it seemed to say 'you write it, you find out, because there's nobody else.' The magazine sent me down to the East End of London as a political activist. We were working around the housing question. In Spitalfields I met, for the first time, the Bangladeshi community.

So I wrote 'East End At Your Feet', which is not about Bangladeshis in Spitalfields, or about Punjabis in Leicester or about Parsees in Poona, but about all my perceptions of what makes up 'Asianness' and what makes young ones different from old ones.

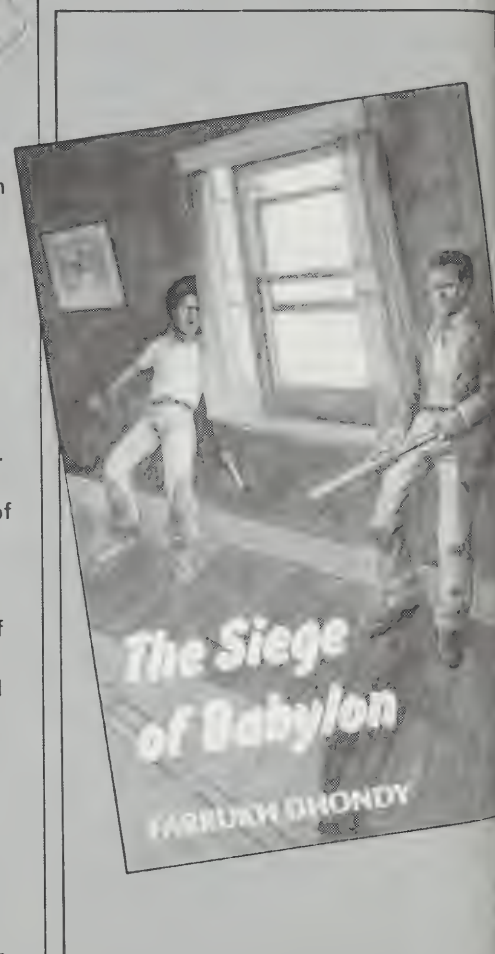
What I haven't said yet was that all this time, my time in London, I was teaching in secondary schools. Teaching English taught me what 'English' children (black and white) read and avoid reading or don't read. I went into teaching without ever having thought about why children read or why they should. Teaching soon taught me why they couldn't and don't, because as an Asian 'supply teacher' in a South London comprehensive, I was lumbered with the classes that had displayed a heroic reluctance in the field.

In the stock-cupboard, a trove to which I was led only on my fourth day of action, after three days of hell with a stick of chalk and dwindling ingenuity, the projected reading of the future generations came into focus on the spines of paperbacks. So this, I thought, is what has replaced 'The Thirty Nine-Steps' and 'The White Company' since I went through school. But that wasn't my first reaction. A kind teacher called Steve took me up and unlocked the door with his special key. I felt as perhaps Ho Chi Minh must have felt when the Russians first said on the hot line that men they could not supply, but sophisticated missiles were being dispatched. Ammunition at last.

I spent an hour in the arsenal that first time. There they all were, waiting for me to lob them into 3.10 or 2.8 (that's what the classes were called). I would devastate the unruly with 'To Kill A Mockingbird', I would lob Wilfrid Owen in their entrenchments of indisci-

pline like a grenade. Then reality caught up. I thought of Delroy and David and literacy and leafed through the books to see how hard the language was. The shelves were weighed down with stuff. There was Gorky and his wretched, blessed childhood. There was the 'Loneliness of The Long Distance Runner'. There were texts with extracts from 'Cider With Rosie', James Thurber's fables, poems by Charles Causley, a balanced diet of irreverence for class values and a reverence for 'human' ones. As I discovered later, the style of irreverence which this teaching espoused wouldn't and couldn't come to terms with the irreverence it perpetrated.

I'm trying to talk about teaching, about what faced me in the months of inexperience on the front, of the casualties in the staff-room who persisted in thinking that if only the right literature would come in contact with the right mind at the right time and they could take the credit. . . . I learnt a lot about writing by teaching it. Criticism is good for writers and instant criticism is not the best but very instructive, and



I've tried to remember that when reading my own stories to pupils. I also learnt about the use of literature in schools. There are, for instance, teachers who will champion Sillitoe and expect pupils to write essays for their CSE folders on why Smith in the 'Loneliness of The Long Distance Runner' doesn't give a bugger about

the race, exhort them to care about why he doesn't care, try and interest them in running the same race with a pen and an answer paper. The irreverence of modern literature gets reduced by the schoolroom to a plaything. No! To a workthing.

That's all about schools, except to say that I went to a school last year to talk to some fourth years about the stories in 'East End At Your Feet' and about my novel, 'The Siege of Babylon'. I asked them, when I'd finished saying where the stories came from, why they were interested. They said they were following an alternative syllabus to the normal CSE, and these were among those they had to read. They had been set exam questions on the books. I wanted to see the questions on my books and asked the teacher to show them to me. They were good questions, but I swear I'd have ended up with a Grade 2 if I'd tried to answer them in one and three quarter hours.

I say they were good questions because they were about culture and the clash of cultures. If you're a black writer in Britain and write about what you know, it is inevitable that culture and its clash are seen as your central thematic material. No good protesting that that was not what you meant at all, because if you're writing stories for young people, it is for the classrooms and school libraries that you write, if not for the exam syllabuses. If you are a black writer, you can't escape being seen by teachers and examination syllabuses as someone who will explain blacks to whites. Isn't that the essence of multi-culturalism?

There is a partial escape from such a fate, if escape is what the writer who wants an audience is after. And that is to acquire an audience independently of the sub-culture and good intentions of multi-ethnicity. The poet I spoke of earlier, saying that he had made a reputation, has not done it through being recognised and recommended as a man who has the power of dispelling prejudice by selling sweetness or increasing familiarity.

Linton Kwesi Johnson is a reggae poet, a political poet who has made his way in the world in which reggae matters and poetry is not in a book. He has a primarily black audience. That's not to say that his work and records and published lyrics won't enter the classroom. They certainly enter mine. Already, I see in the work of pupils who write poems, his influence. But his work can't be used to put across the idea that harmony is the theme and object of writing about and by blacks. The message and method of his poems are antithetical to such an idea. I wish the same for my work, my writing, because as a teacher I know that good lessons have their purpose, but writing, good or bad, should have its own.

Linton Kwesi Johnson



Holding The Clarity

Forces of Victory
Linton Kwesi Johnson
Island Records, 1979

Reviewed by
Dread Fred

Linton Johnson is not simply one of the most original poetic talents in Britain today, he is the only political poet in view. The poem/songs on this album are no longer simply descriptions of the nights of bleeding, the fractricidal life and motion of black rebels. They are no longer simply the thrashing into startling rhyme of the patterns of Jamaican speech. They are no longer extension and poetic projections from the tradition of Big Youth and Jah Stitch whose poetic paternity Linton has acknowledged in his interviews. The poems on this album, set to the sounds of the most sophisticated

dub, are coherent statements of a political whole

In their form, the poems vary. We have the conversational narrative, the rhetorical speech, the celebrative hymn. We even have a track of punk reggae. Linton tells stories, issues warnings, argues defiantly, satirises and gives us, on the whole, a pattern of ideas. The ideas will be familiar to the 'Race Today' reader:

"The SWP can't set wi free
The IMG can't dhu it fi wi
The Communist Party?
Cho dem too arty-farty
An' the Labourites dem
Nah goh fite for wi rites
Soh mek dem gwaan
Now it calm
But ah we who have to really ride the storm."

and again:

Dis is di age of reality
But some a wi a deal wid mitalagy
Dis is di age of Science an' tecknalagy
But some of we ah check feh antiquity."

The poem/songs give memorable and dramatic form to the ideas. 'Sonny's Lettah' tells the story of a sus assault by the police and the reaction with which it meets from little Jim. Sonny writes to his mother and the song takes the shape of a letter from Brixton prison. Jim is held for sus, "kicked in him seed" till he starts to

bleed, "thumped in his belly" till it turns to jelly. Sonny comes to the defence. He is in Brixton for murder.

The narrative is rooted in experience and anger. The experience is that of the "youth of today" about whom sociologists say this and other voices say that. In 'It Noh Funny'. Linton characterises their struggle in the second phase. They love blues dance and 'cuss raas' and have their rackets stopped by the police and refuse to draw social security and pick pockets and crack safes. There is no tinge

of romanticism in the poet's assessment of all this. Linton is watching it and can't raise a smile. It's a harsh reality, seen in the track 'Time Come' as a force without a course.

In 'Independent Intavenshan', from which the first quote is taken, we have a political doctrine to which the other poems point. The track itself is biting satire. The 'Left' is assessed, lumped together and dumped together in a nursery rhyme of black experience.

'Time Come' is addressed to the police:

"It too laate now I did warn yu
Look out, look out, look out.....
When yu kill Oluwale I did warn yu
When yu beat Joshua Francis I did warn yu
When you pick pan the Panthers
I did warn yu
When yu jack me up against the wall,
I didn't bawl
But I did warn yu"

With Linton's latest album on the deck, we witness the marriage of the intellectual tradition of West Indian poetry and the instinctive mass appeal of the reggae lyric. Derek Walcott is confessional, Sparrow is journalistic, Jah this or that are repetitive echoes of the feeling and message of rastaland, Linton is British and ideo-log-ikal. In defining the ideology, he is simple and savage. 'The Age of Reality' says it all. It is a personal address from the poet to the black

community: "Mek we hold the clarity" is its message and visions and religions including the rasta moralities, are seen as escapism from the reality that the other poems pronounce.

But the album is not simply words.

The message has won for Linton the accompaniment of some musicians of distinction. The lead and rhythm guitar of John Kaipye rivals that of Junior Marvin, emerging to take the lead dub line in 'Reality Poem'. Rico's trombone converses with the poems and adds chorus to their moods, farting against the fascists trumpeting the army in "Forces of Victory". Julio Finn's harmonica blows and vamps tragically throughout Sonny's Lettah, adding a melodic backdrop of fate to the confrontation between the black brothers of the poem and the Babylonians. Vivian Weathers' bass rumbles pluckily through the tracks, turning the heady mix into a special brew.

The music is eminently danceable, even though it gives way now and then to the broken hyena sounds of the echo-chamber drum or guitar. The melodies of tracks like 'Reality Poem' should be 12 inch singles — they are almost love song melodies without sliding into sentimentality.

All in all, 'Forces of Victory' is musical progression on Linton's previous record, 'Dread, Beat An' Blood'. The musician has ceased being an employee and has entered a co-operative with the poetry. Taken on its own, without the lyrics the melodies would suggest that British reggae has moved from the bare bones of bass and drum of the toaster and from the soul-stealing chart melodies of Third World and their imitators. The music of 'Forces of Victory' is a kind of jazz with a fighting impulse.

Linton once said that poetry doesn't change anything, that sections of people, acting in their material interests, do. The song, 'Independent Intavenshan' says, "It's we who have to really ride the

storm" and though it means that the black working class has to hold the bridle and be in the saddle for the ride, a black poet of Linton's calibre can certainly wear the spurs. His first album was greeted as the authentic voice of the dreads inna Ingran, the young black dispossessed intent on repossessing. He has now become a leading voice without losing the authenticity, struggling with the black reality, holding the clarity. It's the only album I know that takes sides elegantly. Difficult for any listener not to take sides with it.

Love And Trouble

Love and Trouble
Published by the Peckham Project

Reviewed by
Marlene McLeary

'Love and Trouble', a story by Colleen Skeete and 'Awakening', a book of black poetry by Bev Shaw, though different in content and theme, are the output of two up and coming young writers.

'Love and Trouble' go naturally together, as Colleen Skeete's story character, Jean Harver, discovers when the deceptive face of love disappears. Only trouble remains, which Jean has to muddle through on her own; police trouble. Had she not been stood up by a previous boy — the boy of her "school-gate romances" — Jean might never have met the boy of her new romance — her deceiver.

Colleen Skeete's tale of a girl, her school friends and romances is light-hearted and witty in parts, with trouble being delivered as the final blow.

'Awakening', a collection of poems and expressive illustrations by Bev Shaw, touches upon two main themes which run throughout the collection. Firstly, the feeling of being lost and left to fate, is expressed in the poems, 'No Fixed Abode' and 'Destiny'.

Secondly, the urge to unite in strength emerges in the poems 'Never Different' and 'All of We'.

On a lighter note there is 'Love' or the short four lined snippet, 'Boozed', among others.

Several of the poems, such as 'I is True Blackness' and 'Rags 'n' Riches', deal with black identity and the dilemma in seeking it. This theme, along with the other two previously mentioned, have the positive quality of awakening somebody — Miss Shaw, I'm awake!



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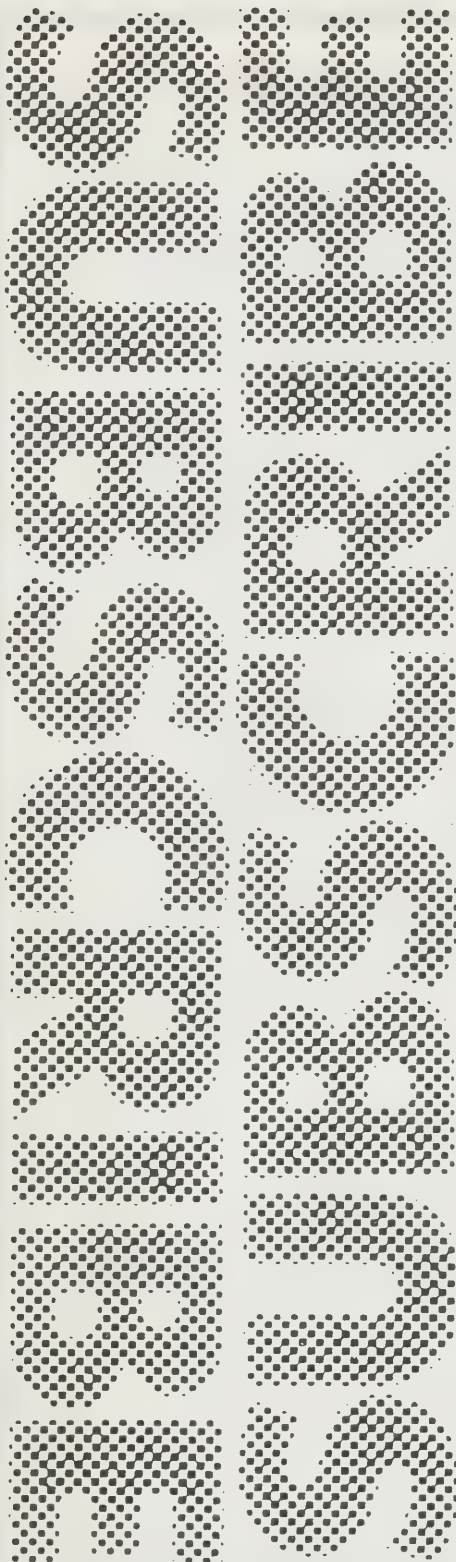
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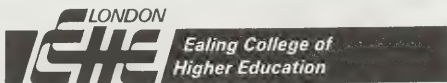
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Race Today

VOICE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN BRITAIN

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1979 25P



Band of the Year
CARNIVAL '79

RACE TODAY/MANGROVE RENEGADES

Dominican Appeal

Dear Race Today,

Last night I was speaking to a friend in England about the distressing situation in our native Dominica, in the aftermath of the unprecedented devastation wrought by Hurricane David.

You see, we've both received letters this week from members of our family in Dominica by courtesy of the Barbados Post Office. It now seems clear, that because of very severe damage to the island's Hydro electric installations, it will be at least a year before basic power is restored. The outlook for telephone communications is only marginally less bleak, although it is possible to book a call to one number in Dominica No. 2222 at police headquarters to get details of relatives.

About 40% of the island's homes were completely destroyed, while another 40 to 50% had their roofs blown off. The news is that even where people have carried out makeshift repairs to roofs, seepage of water is considerable — there are no windows —

and virtually everything is mildewing and rotting.

Government is considering the repair of schools as a matter of priority, so as to house the homeless and allow time for the proper construction of homes.

No reassurance has yet been given to thousands of farmers, heavily indebted to local banks for cultivations which have been wiped out.

There is obviously going to be a fundamental need for food aid for at least a year, before even the bannana crops begin to recover. Then of course there's the dire need for funds to finance the reconstruction of homes, then roads and bridges etc.

We thought that you all at 'Race Today' might be able to assist by advertising free, the Dominica Disaster Appeal. The details are as indicated on the enclosed leaflet issued by the Dominica High Commission. I have every confidence in your sympathy for and readiness to assist a fellow West Indian island in really desperate need.

Yours,
E.M.E.N. Douglas.

DOMINICAN HURRICANE APPEAL

More than 60,000 of the Caribbean Island's 75,000 inhabitants have had their homes destroyed by roofs blown off by the 150 mph winds of Hurricane David.

Please help urgently with funds, clothes, footwear and non-perishable foodstuffs. Even £1.00 would be greatly appreciated. It all adds up.

Funds should be sent to:

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Account No. 80315745 Sort Code:
20—05—30

Other contributions to:

The Dominica High Commission

10 Kensington Court

London W8, or;

510 Harrow Road

London W9

Jury Vetting

Dear Race Today,

In a number of important trials involving black defendants (e.g. The Mangrove Nine) defence counsels, in order that justice should be seen to be done, made applications at the outset of such trials that they be allowed to question the jurors concerning their political convictions. The object of the applications was to ascertain whether the jurors were members of the National Front, or whether they were prejudiced against blacks. These applications were promptly rejected; and on one occasion, defence counsel was accused by the very learned judge of making a frivolous application, and of wasting the time of the court. Defence counsels have also argued that as a man is entitled to be tried by his peers, there should be at least two or three black jurors on juries trying black defendants. The reason being that it is very unlikely that a black juror will be a member of the National Front or share its views. Moreover, a black juror will be able to impart to the white jurors certain background information about blacks which would be alien to them, and which might assist them in reaching a fair verdict. Regretfully, such arguments are never taken seriously by Her Majesty's Judges.

In the present "jury vetting" case, it seems that potential jurors are being investigated by the prosecution even before they have set foot in court. In rejecting the defence submission that vetting of jurors was an improper gathering of information, the learned Judge said:— "if there was a right to investigate jurors in a limited range of cases, it was not for the purpose of electing a biased jury, but in the hope of get-

ting an unbiased jury". The learned judge, in order to justify his decision, went on to tell one of the defence counsels — "your client would not like it if the local chairman of the National Front appeared on the jury." All the defendants are white.

These are the very reasons that impelled defence counsel, when defending black defendants in a "limited range of cases," to make the perfectly proper applications as stated above — and not to investigate potential jurors in a clandestine manner.

Thus, it appears to me that the recent practice of vetting jurors demonstrates that there now exists in this country one law for the prosecution and another law for the defence.

Yours faithfully,
Leonard Woodley,
Paper Buildings,
London EC4.

CARIG

A Committee Against Repression in Guyana has been formed in London. It consists of Guyanese and other blacks concerned about the current political trend in the country. Bulletin No 3 out now. price 15p from CARIG, 5a Chignell Place, London W13.

We wish to apologise to our readers for the delay in the publication of our journal. The Notting Hill Carnival necessitated the full mobilisation of our entire Collective and therefore we took the decision to suspend publication of the journal. Editor.

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TO HELL WITH THE CRE

EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL

The Commission for Racial Equality, a sub-department of the Home Office, staffed by bureaucrats black and white, granted £2,800 to each Carnival Committee.

The C.R.E., like any colonial power granting aid to an under-developed territory, laid down conditions which they publicised in a press release:

"Any future funding from the C.R.E. for all carnivals will be dependent on whether the two conditions are fulfilled.

a) That a single organisation which should be recognised as the only official carnival body, should be formed capable of developing the artistic, educational, commercial and community dimensions.

b) That a suitable venue at which carnival processions would converge and where the final events would take place should be arranged."

This journal received a copy of the press release and, in the normal course of journalistic procedure, proceeded to contact the C.R.E. for further details.

We were informed that the conditions outlined were formulated following recommendations by two black field officers who were deputed to carry out investigations within the Carnival movement.

We asked the C.R.E.'s information officer in regard to condition b) to describe for what final events we were to converge in a park. We quote his reply verbatim:

"Prizes being given and things like that or er er some suitable ending to the whole maybe".

The same question was put to one of the black field officers. Again, we quote his reply:

"After you tramp (sic) through the streets you could have competitions in the park".

It is a well known fact that the bureaucrat is the greatest enemy of art, but the illiteracy of C.R.E. officials passeth all understanding. There are no final events in the structure of Carnival. It is not an athletic meeting at Crystal Palace where medals are presented after every race. A band leaves from a given point and the costumes are displayed on the streets. Within striking distance of the leaving point, there is a competition area where the costumes are displayed to an audience. Then, the participants are free to prance and dance and make merry on the streets. To make the competition a final event is to present tattered and battered costumes, out of tune pans and tired and drunken masqueraders in a massive anti-climax and let-down. Further, a prize-giving has an atmosphere and dignity of its own far removed from the

bacchanalia of the festival.

Secondly, on this vexed question of merging two committees, we say that the C.R.E. is responsible for keeping in existence the useless and irrelevant Carnival and Arts Committee. Could the C.R.E. please indicate sources of income of the C.A.C. in the off season period to which they add their subsidies? Could the C.R.E. please indicate their reasons for supporting the C.A.C., bearing in mind that last year they gave as the only reason that the C.A.C. was representative of the Notting Hill community?

In the light of the above, could the C.R.E. explain the existence of officials on the C.A.C. whose connection with Notting Hill is zero?

The similarities with colonial domination are too blatant to ignore. There are many examples, in the course of anti-colonial history, when the British insisted on incorporating in negotiations for independence insignificant groups with pro British tendencies, when the mass of the population clearly gave their allegiances to the progressive and revolutionary formations. It is through these groups that the coloniser retains a foothold in the political and social life of the emerging nation. It is through these groups that the colonisers warps the development of the new nation.

And so it is with the Carnival. The C.A.C. is amenable to the imprisonment of the festival in a park. Only a few weeks before Carnival the C.A.C. announced that it would hold its events in Hyde Park and only a staggering fee demanded by the Department of Environment forced a last minute cancellation. Is it a coincidence that the C.A.C.'s policy is identical to the C.R.E.'s?

And at what price are these traitors bought? For £2,800 these hustlers are determined to mutilate our festival and transform it into the image of the coloniser. In this International Year of the Child, £2,800 could not purchase enough lollipops for the numbers of children who attended the festival.

Carnival is a cultural festival not an exercise in race relations. To hell with the C.R.E. Let the Carnival movement concentrate on raising its own funds and demand of the Arts Council that it lives up to its responsibilities.

On the question of going into a park for final events, Race Today/Mangrove Renegades, the Band of the Year 1979, quotes the world's greatest calypsonian, the Mighty Sparrow:

"Who want to go could go up dey
But we ent goin no whey".

Race Today Collective, September 1979

FREE DESSIE WOODS

NOT ONE MORE YEAR



WHO IS DESSIE WOODS

Dessie Woods is a 35 year old black American woman and mother of two teenaged children. She is currently in the third year of a 22 year sentence imposed on her for assassinating a white Southern man who had intended to rape and kill her and her friend Cheryl Todd.

Her home town is Atlanta in the Southern State of Georgia. It is the same state that the US President, Jimmy Carter, hails from. From the beginning of his presidency, he has mouthed alot about human rights. Georgia has the distinction of never having convicted a white man of rape.

THE FACTS OF DESSIE WOODS' CASE

On June 14, 1975, Dessie Woods agreed to accompany her friend, Cheryl Todd,

on an urgent visit to see Todd's brother in Reidsville Prison, Georgia. The brother was ill and had written to his sister complaining that he was getting no proper medical treatment from the prison. Neither women had funds to take transport to the prison so they hitch-hiked.

As they arrived outside the prison, Todd collapsed. State troopers, from the Georgia State Patrol Office, directly opposite the prison, watched the scene and then came and accused the women of public drunkenness. In fact, Todd's collapse was caused by drugs she had taken to ease her high blood pressure and by the heat of the day. Nevertheless, both women were arrested and locked up. They were released three days later after a friend in Atlanta wired them some money.

While hitch-hiking out of Reidsville to return to Atlanta, they accepted a lift from a Ronald Horne, a white Southern salesman who, it emerged

later, had a reputation in his home town — Rentz — for raping black women. However, both women believed that Horne was a plainclothes detective, due to the presence of radio equipment and a holstered gun in the car. Horne used the radio to contact a man called Royce Yawn and described the situation of the women. He arranged to meet Yawn in a cafe en route. At the cafe, the two men argued about who would have which woman. When they departed, both women got into Horne's car.

As the journey began again, the women realised that Horne was not heading in the direction of Atlanta. They demanded he stop the car, they got out and walked back to the cafe. Horne pursued them and promised to take them to Atlanta. When they refused to go with him, he used their belief that he was a detective and threatened to arrest them. They got back into the car and it was then that

Horne told them he intended to sexually abuse them. He drove to a deserted place. Todd became quite hysterical and jumped screaming out of the car. Horne took up his gun to shoot her and it was then that Dessie Woods intervened to save the life of her friend and her own. She wrestled with Horne for control of the gun and shot him twice in his head. She then went and found Todd who was still hysterical and who had taken refuge in a ditch. She told her Horne was dead and could do them no more harm. They returned to the body and took Horne's wallet so they would have money to pay for transportation for the rest of the journey.

Both women were arrested the following day, taken to Wheeler County Jail and indicted on charges of first degree murder and armed robbery.

THE RAILROADING OF DESSIE WOODS TO PRISON

The trial was fixed for September 2. Both women were given court appointed attorneys, although by the time the trial commenced, Cheryl Todd's parents had hired an attorney to defend her.

Before the commencement of the trial in Wheeler County, the defence counsel filed several motions aimed at getting the original indictment quashed. Their argument was that the Grand Jury, who issued the indictment, was illegal on the grounds that it contained an under-representation of blacks,

women and people in the age bracket of 18-30. The motion was granted only after questioning of the jury commissioners revealed blatant anti-black sentiments. The other motion the defence won was the removal of the trial from Wheeler County to another county. Both women were released on bail.

The new venue chosen by the state for the trial was Hawkinsville in the County of Pulaski, an area in which the ideology of white southern supremacy has prevailed largely unchallenged. In the days and weeks leading up to the trial, deliberate and successful efforts were made to play on the racism of the local whites and their fear of blacks. They readily believed that the city was going to be invaded by militant blacks who would upset the old order of life. Hawkinsville was turned into a siege city with state troopers being sent in to assist the local police.

The trial judge chosen was one named O'Connor who had achieved fame only months earlier when he freed, without conviction, two white policemen who had castrated and murdered a black man in a neighbouring county. Ten days before the trial of Woods and

Todd, he issued a ruling designed, he said, to ensure an 'orderly and fair trial without disruption or undue publicity', but which was, in fact, an undisguised attempt to prevent supporters of the women from demonstrating or the trial receiving any publicity. All parties concerned in the case were prohibited from making any statements about the case for the purpose of public consumption. Photographs and other media people were prohibited from taking pictures in the courthouse, the courthouse building or any street area adjacent to the building. No more than 25 people were to be allowed in the building to queue for seats in the court. Demonstrations, including picketing with placards, were banned. Before the trial began on January 19, 1976, the defence managed to get the ban on demonstrations lifted. Local blacks, who participated in demonstrations outside the courthouse, were singled out for intimidation. One was sacked from his job and two black highschool students were suspended.

The trial began with jury selection. Most of the local blacks selected for jury service made it plain that they did not want to be part of this trial. They did so by pretending to be stupid and therefore not eligible. On the other hand, local whites were eager to serve. Finally a jury was empanelled which consisted of six black women, one black man and five white women.

After jury selection, the defence



began the task of filing 20 pre-trial motions which included one to suppress prosecution evidence which was brought on the day of the trial itself. Almost all of the 20 pre-trial defence motions were refused. Dessie Woods was represented by a black attorney called Ralph Bacote who had only recently come into the case and who O'Connor refused any time to familiarise himself with the details of the case.

The trial itself was a sham. No evidence whatsoever was forthcoming to disprove Dessie Woods' contention that she had shot Horne in self-defence. The other would-be rapist, Yawn, was brought to give evidence to disprove that he and Horne had been drinking very heavily that day. However, his perjury was shown up when the defence called the owner of the cafe who supported the fact that they both had been drinking.

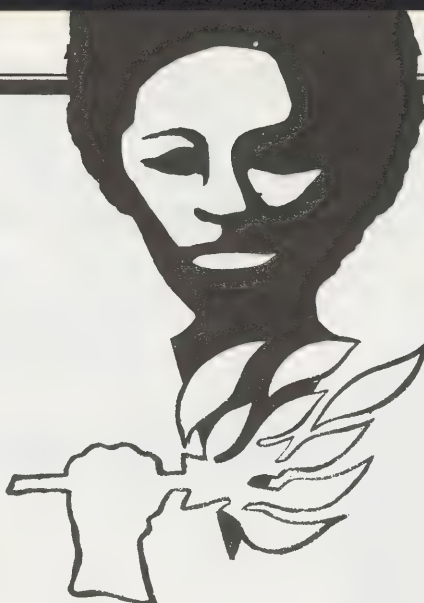
The jury was not able to reach a verdict at the end of the trial even after hours of deliberation. On Saturday, 31 January, O'Connor demanded that the jury reach a verdict and adjourned the case until the following Monday. The National Committee to Defend Dessie Woods say there is evidence to support their belief that the jury was tampered with during that weekend recess.

On Monday, February 2, the jury came back with a verdict. They convicted Dessie Woods of voluntary manslaughter, not first degree murder, and armed robbery and Cheryl Todd was convicted of theft. Dessie Woods addressed the blacks on the jury and told them: "I have been in a lot of cities big and small, but you are the dumbest niggers I have ever seen. You let those devils brain wash you to kill your own sister". She was sentenced to 10 years for the voluntary manslaughter and 12 years for armed robbery. The sentences are to run concurrently. Cheryl Todd was sentenced to five years with three and-a-half years of the sentence to be served on probation. She was allowed bail pending an appeal, Woods was not. The judge denied bail on the grounds that her release would represent a threat to the community.

APPEAL DENIED

On November 1, 1977, the Supreme Court of Georgia, in a unanimous decision, upheld the conviction of Dessie Woods, maintaining the tradition of never convicting a white man for rape in Georgia.

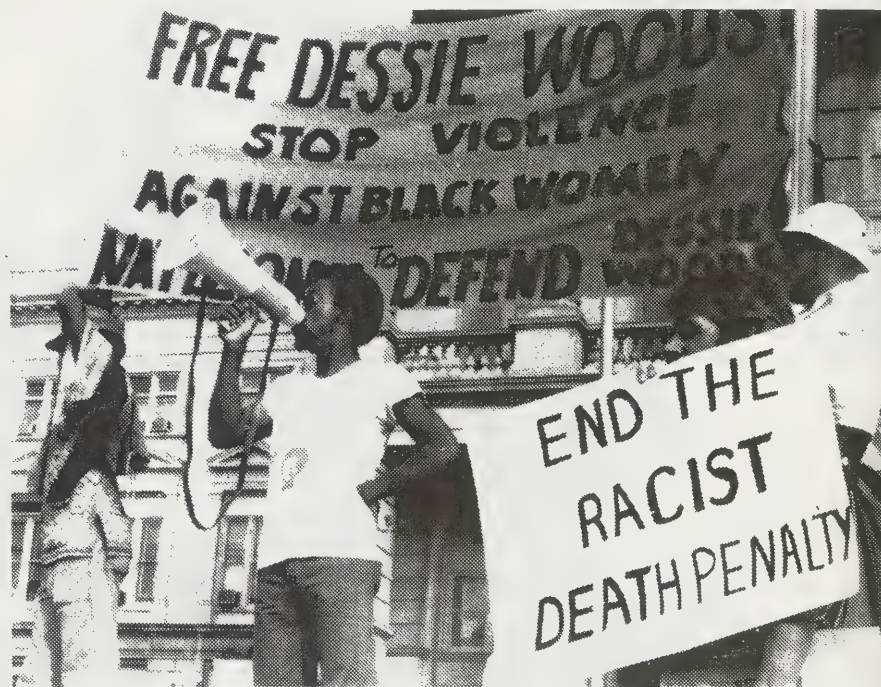
The Defence lawyers had asked for a re-trial and listed 20 errors which had taken place in the original trial to support their request. However, the



Supreme Court ruled that not one of the errors had any merit. One of the errors cited by the defence lawyers was that the trial court judge had not informed the jury of the law on self-defence. He cited the case of Joan Little, Yvonne Wanrow and Inez Garcia, all of whom used violence to defend themselves against rapists and were acquitted. The Georgia Supreme Court ruled, "we find no error in the trial courts charge on the law of self-defence". The same court also denied the defence their motion for a re-hearing.

nised by a committee made up of an amalgam of groups, but dominated by the local Nation of Islam and a left formation, the October League. Soon after the imprisonment, this was dissolved.

The present campaign to free Dessie is led by the African People's Socialist Party, which is based in Kentucky. In March 1976 they adopted the case and soon after formed the National Committee to Defend Dessie Woods. They have defined the movement to free Dessie Woods as part of the black struggle against colonialism in the US. Whites, who are also engaged in the campaign to free Dessie Woods, have formed the Dessie Woods Support Coalition which works directly under the leadership of the African People's Socialist Party. Local Dessie Woods Support Committees have also been set up in various cities throughout the US. These formations have, during 1977, 1978, and 1979, organised demonstrations, pickets, radio programmes and other actions. On July 4, 1978, more than 1,000 people demonstrated on the streets of Plains in Georgia, and in San Francisco demanding the immediate release of Dessie Woods.



The case is now pending before the US Supreme Court.

In late 1978, lawyers issued a writ of habeas corpus without success, and moves are now being made to get the case heard as a human rights violation before the United Nations.

THE CAMPAIGN TO FREE DESSIE WOODS

The campaign around Dessie's case, before and during her trial, was orga-

The National Committee to Defend Dessie Woods have adopted for 1979 the slogan 'Not One More Year' and part of its strategy is to internationalise Dessie's plight. To this end, Ms Damesha Blackearth, Chairperson of the National Committee to Defend Dessie Woods, is on a two month European tour. The British part of her tour begins on September 11 and continues to September 20. It is being organised and sponsored by the Race Today Collective.

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE ASIAN STRUGGLE

IN THE FIRST SECTION OF A TWO PART ARTICLE, WE EXAMINE THE HISTORY OF ASIAN SHOP FLOOR STRUGGLES IN BRITAIN AND POSE THE WAY FORWARD.

PART TWO WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE NEXT ISSUE.



The immigrants, who came to Britain from India and Pakistan in the late fifties and early sixties, came to sell their labour. The rapidity with which particular sectors of the British economy absorbed this internationally mobile army of labour demonstrates two things. First, that in that era, whole sections of factories were being abandoned by white labour for better conditions, better wages, shorter or regularised hours and supervisory posts. Second, that those immigrants who came from India and Pakistan as individuals from various backgrounds, urban and rural, land-owning and peasant, quickly found their collective political identity as a distinct section of the working class in Britain.

They worked where the work was hard and the conditions decidedly unpleasant. At the Courtaulds Red Scar Mills in Preston, a rayon spinning mill, Asians first sought and obtained employment in 1956. By 1964, a third of all the workers at the mill were Asians. Two departments of the mill were wholly immigrant, organised in ethnic work-teams under white supervisors. In Southall, in West London, there were 350 Asians in 1951. By the mid sixties, Asians formed 12% of the area's population. From this one community, they went to work in four factories, two of which produced bread, the third called Batchelor's Peas and the fourth, which employed 40% of all the Asian workers in the area, Woolf's. By 1965, 90% of all unskilled labour at this rubber factory was Punjabi Sikh.

At Courtaulds in Preston, and at Woolf's in Southall, several skirmishes and two battles, significant in the history of immigrant labour in Britain, were fought between the Asian labour-force and the managers and mediators of British industry. The same battle has been fought in a hundred factories on parallel issues with similar demands. The pattern of industrial struggle of the Asian workforce, which arrived with the second phase of immigration in the early seventies, from Africa, was the same. At the Mansfield Hosiery Mills, in Loughborough in 1972, at Imperial Typewriters in Leicester in 1974, and at Grunwick in 1978, Asian workers, in these instances, largely from African backgrounds, rebelled and organised against the continuity of a colonial relationship which is common and central.

The conditions of work, and the conditions of the machinery on which the labour performs, are essential ingredients of this relationship. Broadly speaking, immigrant labour has always been, and continues to be, employed in those sectors of industry in which Britain has not made sufficient and competitive capital investment. The factories are old or converted. The machinery is antiquated. Profits depend on long working hours, on overtime, on low wages, on constant ploys to step up production. Profits are always gleaned from labour, but in the case of Asian workers, they are extracted with an intensity which the white labour force is unwilling to tolerate.

COLONIALISM ON THE SHOP FLOOR

If we examine the background of the industrial struggles in which Asians participated in the sixties and early seventies, these conditions of work emerge. Of the Courtaulds Red Scar Mill in Preston, where in 1965 one of the first 'racial' strikes took place, Paul Foot says:

"In the Tyre Cord Spinning Department the machines never stop. The workers man banks of spindles (about a hundred spindles per machine), rewinding the spools when the thread breaks. The work is dexterous rather than strenuous, but the conditions are decidedly unpleasant. The air is thick with the stench of chemicals and the noise is appalling. Particularly at a time of full employment, it is work which men and women instinctively shun." (Institute of Race Relations Newsletter July 1965)

At Woolf's, the basic pay in 1964 was £11. A worker at Perivale-Guterman, a textile firm in West London, recalls being the first Asian employed there. He says that in 1964 there were a handful of machines and fifteen workers in the firm. He used to put in 84 hours a week for a pay of 3/6d an hour. Over the years, the same firm employed more Asian workers and expanded 'till in 1969, there was a fire at the factory. The insurance money paid for a new plant and the firm modernised its machinery.

In 1974, Courtaulds, a firm which has built a substantial amount of wealth on the labour of immigrants, declared that it had doubled its profits in the year 1972-1973. Courtaulds' Harwood Cash Yarn factory, in Nottingham, built itself on the labour of white women, and gradually replaced this work force with Asians in the late sixties and early seventies. In 1973 Harwood Cash Yarn was hit by the industrial action of its Asian workers. The work they did was described thus:

"The work is noisy, demanding and monotonous. The operator keeps an eye on two dozen bobbins of different coloured thread. As they run out they have to be replaced by a fresh bobbin. The work is constant and tiring. But if the operator is prepared to put in a twelve hour day, seven days a week, he can end up with a pay of £35 a week, less stoppages. . . . While white workers signed a contract of employment that gave a standard 40-hour working week, the Asians were required to sign for a 60-hour basic week. Many in fact put in a 72-hour or even 80-hour working week." (*'Race Today' February 1974).

The mechanisms of production in these semi-skilled sectors of industry ensured that black workers congregated together in them. Communities grew around the particular work places. An apocryphal story, purporting to explain the concentration of

Punjabi labour in Southall, says that the personnel manager of one of the firms in Southall was an ex-army type who had been in a Sikh regiment in India, and his special knowledge of Sikhs and favourable disposition towards them nurtured a settlement of Punjabis in the locality of the factory. The truth is, of course, that the Asians went where work was available, and it was available where there was a shortage of white labour willing to take on the exploitative hours.

This fractioning-off of black workers into the lower paid and hard worked jobs is the essential ingredient in the colonial relationship that British industry established with its new work force. For the workers, a visible token of this relationship was the white supervisor who was inevitably put in charge of teams of shift workers wherever Asians found employment. In the sixties, very few Asians found promotion into supervisory jobs. In very many factories, Asian labour was hired in gangs and put under the control of one white charge-hand who would allocate the work, dispense overtime, recommend the hire and fire of workers and, in many cases, take bribes for doing or not doing something for or to the workers under his charge.

The ghettoisation of labour also meant that the school teacher from Ludhiana, the mechanic from Hoshiarpur, the graduate of Punjab University, the illiterate middle peasant from a village in Azad Kashmir, found themselves working on the same machines on the same shop floor. Britain recognised no distinctions of class or qualification amongst the Asians whose labour it used. It was after the first wave of Asian unrest on the industrial scene that management by management, the distinctions were born. A separation was made between the militants and the docile, between the political activists and the followers, between the rude and the polite. It was in the industrial struggle that managements realised that Pakistanis and Indians had political allegiances which may keep one section at work while the other was on strike.

SHOP FLOOR REBELLIONS

What started as an effect of weakness became the cause of a strength. The localisation of Asian workers in one factory, or indeed in one section of a factory, became the chief nucleus for industrial struggle. The pattern of employment set the pattern for independent organisation. One of the earliest Asian strikes of recurring significance was in Woolf's in Southall in 1963. As far back as 1960, an Asian worker in the Woolf's rubber plant attempted to unionise the Asians. Gurdev Singh recruited 400 people and asked for recognition of the factory branch by approaching



a district officer of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU). The organiser approached the management of Woolf's who refused to recognise the union. The Ministry of Labour of Harold Macmillan's Tory government was asked to intervene. The Ministry recommended recognition but had no powers to compel it. Woolf's again refused. At the time they were paying £11 a week to their workers, and one of the complaints from the Asian workforce was that charge-hands were charging them bribes to employ them in the first place, and taking money selectively from workers to give them the overtime which would boost their weekly income to £25.

The attempt at unionisation came to nothing that year. Gurdev Singh left the factory. In 1963, in secret meetings held at the homes of Asian workers, 452 workers were again enrolled in an attempt at unionisation. The circumstances which enabled this development, the first rumblings of industrial organisation in the new work force, were both peculiar and, with the help of hindsight, inevitable. Several members of the Executive Committee of the Indian Workers' Association (IWA), were employed on Woolf's shop-floor. The IWA had been set up some years before to act as a community organisation for social and cultural events. Many of the executive members and the Punjabi workers at Woolf's had been, or still were, members of political parties back in India, and apart from sending money home to their families, they contributed occasionally to party funds in India by having a collection, or got together to send a cheque to the government of India when it appealed to its citizens for flood or drought or famine relief.

The workers, who came to the secret meetings, were Hindu Punjabis, Sikhs and Pakistanis. They swore an oath, on hastily assembled holy books of each religion, to refrain from giving bribes to charge-hands for overtime. Some brief speeches were made, and the management was approached by elected spokesmen and by the regional organiser of the TGWU who had been contacted. The management

again declined to recognise the union. An officer of the management approached Mr Gill, the President of the IWA, to ask him to keep the union out of the factory. Gill refused to intervene. It was true that the workers had come together as the Asian workforce of the factory. They were conscious of their power to paralyse production, but conscious also of the fact that, in Britain, the dialogue between workers and owners and management was mediated by the unions. The workers issued a threat to management.

MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE

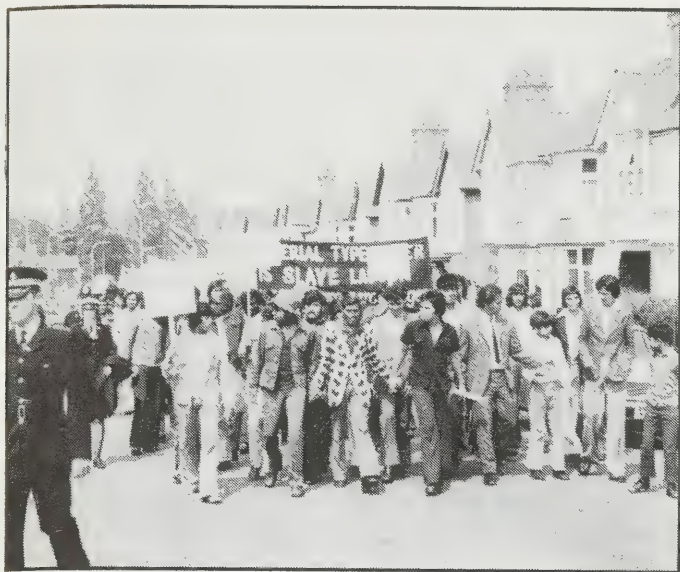
Management at Woolf's were aware that there was an upheaval on the shop floor and that several meetings had taken place outside the gates of the factory. They offered recognition to the union and, at the same time, sacked two of the militants who had formed it. The issue of recognition of the TGWU branch was connected with four demands that the workers made. The move to unionisation was simply the nearest weapon at hand to redress grievances. The workers put to the management that those paid below the minimum basic wage for the industry should be brought up to par. They wanted stipulated tea-breaks, because resting time had become an issue which caused constant friction on the shop floor. They wanted cleaners to be treated according to provisions laid down by a national agreement (the TGWU regional organiser gave workers details of this agreement, about which they knew nothing). Lastly, they de-

manded increased basic wages for mill room workers and an introduction of a system of three grades of workers in this department. The management was willing to recognise the union, but hesitated on the granting of the demands. The workers started a ban on overtime. The management capitulated.

The workers had had a taste of success and they had organised as an Asian workforce. Their first strike, in October 1964, was unofficial. The Asians walked out of the factory when one of their number was dismissed for being rude to a foreman. The worker said that the foreman had asked him for a bribe. The friction between the worker and the foreman was not new. Every dispute and rumour of dispute at Woolf's had started in the same way. At the end of 1964, with the blessing of the management, the National Officer of the General Workers Group of the Transport and General Workers Union stepped in and negotiated a procedure to be followed in case of disputes of this sort.

In May 1965, this clause, in the assimilation of Asian labour into the processes and practices of the British working class, was tested. It failed the test. Management at Woolf's decided to sack ten militants from the mill room. The workers went through the official procedure to have them reinstated. The management wouldn't have them back. The negotiating procedure, dictated by the National Joint Industrial Council for The Rubber Industry, came into play. Danny Evans, the District TGWU officer, went diligently through the motions of the procedure. It was not what the workers wanted. They wanted backing from the union for immediate industrial action, which they felt confident would get the dismissed workers reinstated.





When the union didn't give them official backing, the Asian work force instituted a ban on overtime and many of them stopped paying their union dues. There were harsh words and acrimony between Danny Evans, the district TGWU officer, and the shop stewards of the Asian work force. Evans, who was trying his best to restrict the dispute to the methods he had always used and had some faith in, was castigated as a racist. The TGWU offices were picketed by the men and the union took the decision to remove Evans and put a harder negotiator, with a left-wing reputation and a dedication to unionising the black work force, in his place. The new negotiator, Fred Howell, succeeded in getting seven of the dismissed men reinstated. Two others had already got jobs elsewhere and didn't want to return to Woolf's.

In November 1965, Woolf's again became the testing ground of the early and tenuous relationship between the British unions and the relatively young, black industrial workforce. A worker called Mukhtiar Singh complained to his shop steward and to security officials of the factory that he had witnessed a chargehand pilfering materials from the factor. Mukhtiar Singh was called before the management and told that since he had been ten minutes late for a shift, he could collect his papers and clear off. He was dismissed.

The Asians' shop stewards met that evening. They didn't call a general meeting of the membership. They didn't even check to see who was a fully paid-up member of the TGWU and whose membership had officially lapsed. Most unions allow for a period of non-payment from forgetful or reluctant members, and reinstate them as members with the proviso that they won't get the full support of union action of one sort or the other 'till their subscriptions have been paid for a specified time. The shop stewards didn't believe that the negotiating machinery would get Mukhtiar Singh his job back. They called an all-out strike to which the Asian work force, mobilised from door to door in the community and the next day at the factory gates, responded. The

TGWU was immediately called in. The Asians mounted pickets at the factory. The strike lasted six weeks.

The management pulled a classic ploy. It issued dismissal notices to the whole striking workforce and sent a letter to most of these employees offering to re-employ them on new contracts. They excluded the militants and people whom they thought were leading the strike.

The TGWU responded in a way which destroyed its own organisation in the factory. After several representations from the workers to the head offices of the union, the TGWU said that the union would give 'industrial support' but not 'official' support to the strikers. Lorry drivers, also members of the TGWU, crossed the picket lines because, on phoning the regional union office, they were told that the strike was not being officially supported. When the strikers asked for strike pay, they were told that several constitutional complications prevented them from getting any. The officials at TGWU headquarters led the shop stewards through a maze of bureaucratic conditions and stipulations.

When an end to the strike was finally negotiated in January, the men who drifted back were given jobs at lower grades than the ones they had held before the action. The two shop stewards who had called the strike without recourse to any democratic procedure amongst the Asian work force, left the factory of their own accord and never went back.

TRADE UNION SELLOUT

In almost all the industrial struggles of the Asian workers, from the early sixties to the conflict at Grunwick in 1978, the relationship between the supervisory staff, the shop floor management and the workers has resulted in industrial action which, looked at from the point of view of unions, may be construed as hasty and out of all proportion to the incidents which sparked trouble. Underlying the flare-up between the worker and the supervisor, which has been occasioned by arguments over tea-breaks, toilet-breaks, lateness, rudeness, racist remarks, is the reluctance of the Asian workforce to a smooth assimilation into the mechanisms and procedures of capitalist production. Suspension or dismissal of the worker concerned has led to a show of force by the other Asians whose grievances emerge as the workforce struggles with the questions and issues of effective organisation.

Even those firms which employed the soft glove techniques, that more enlightened managements have taken with black labour, have sooner or later come up against the problem of increasing productivity and profit and the resistance of black workers to schemes

to achieve it. At the Red Scar Mills of Courtaulds, the first skirmish, which has become a landmark in Asian labour history in this country, was fought. Red Scar is a weaving firm which uses chemical processes. The workers in the Tyre Cord Spinning Department are required to supervise a bank of spindles on a machine. Throughout 1964, Courtaulds was seeking improved productivity from its plants and its management at Red Scar duly negotiated, behind the backs of the workers, a deal with the regional organiser of the TGWU to which the workers belonged.

When an agreement was signed by the union official, the shop stewards, only one of whom was Asian, were told to convene a meeting and get the workers to accept that they would have to supervise one and a half machines each instead of the one. They would get a ten shilling bonus a week. The workers called a meeting with the regional organiser of their union and asked him to explain the agreement he had made. They jeered him and pointed out that the agreement meant a 50% increase in output for a 3% increase in wage.

The workers voted against the proposals and the plan was shelved for a month. Then, without warning, the workers on the afternoon shift were confronted by line management who brought in red paint and brushes and divided the machines by a boundary into halves. They told the men to start supervising one and a half machines each. The men refused spontaneously and staged a 'sit-in' immediately. The machines began to clog and chaos ensued for 17 hours. Then the black workers, most of them Indian and Pakistani, walked out.

A three week strike ensued. The TGWU chairman at the factory was one Richard Roberts. He immediately began a campaign amongst the strikers to return to work before any negotiations could begin. He declared to the newspapers that the strike was 'unofficial'. Roberts also told the press that the strike was 'racial' and said to Paul Foot, "I could have said it was 'tribal' but that might have been a bit unfair". (IRR Newsletter July 1965). The strikers stayed out 'till mid June, attempting to organise themselves without the precept of precedent and with no recourse to a black movement equipped to mobilise the assistance they needed to win. The 120 West Indians involved in the action went back to work in early June when representatives of the West Indian High Commissions assembled a strike meeting and gave them a pep talk about 'responsible behaviour'.

Other outsiders intervened. For the first time the left wing of the Labour Party, in the person of a Mr Ray Challinor, offered assistance to the strikers in the form of attempting to get the left wing trade union movement to respond with support and solidarity motions. In every succeeding strike, with the exception of one or two, notably Imperial Typewriters in Leicester in 1974, the strike committees of Asian workers have been solicited by politicians of the left wing of the labour movement in search of a

mass base. These politicians, the last of them to enter the public eye in the glare of Asian industrial struggle being Mr Jack Dromey of Grunwick, have one thing in common. They don't believe in the independent movement of the black section of the working class. Their expertise with union conventions and constitutions, their undeniable ability to get resolutions passed in left wing dominated branches and connections with a labour movement network, inevitably give them, for a week or two, the appearance of men who know their way about class struggle. Not a single industrial strike of Asians or black workers has been won through this network of assistance, and thereby hangs a tale.

BLACK POWER INTERVENES



At Red Scar, again for the first time in Asian industrial struggle, the black movement made a much publicised intervention in the persons of Mr Roy Sawh and Mr Michael De Freitas, sometimes known as Michael X. They came from the Racial Adjustment Action Society (RAAS). Their intervention took the form, at first, of a generalised demand from Mr Sawh for a separate union for blacks. De Freitas later told the press that though he was against white people, he was not for separate unions. The workers listened to both these gentlemen, applauded their spirit and laughed at their anti-white jokes, but couldn't take them or their organisation as serious channels of in-

dustrial struggle. It was apparent to the workers from the beginning that Michael X would bring them publicity in the quality Sunday papers, but no more. RAAS had no experience with mobilising an independent black revolutionary force in Britain and didn't seem to them capable of analysing the issues of the strike, let alone mobilising national or international support for it.

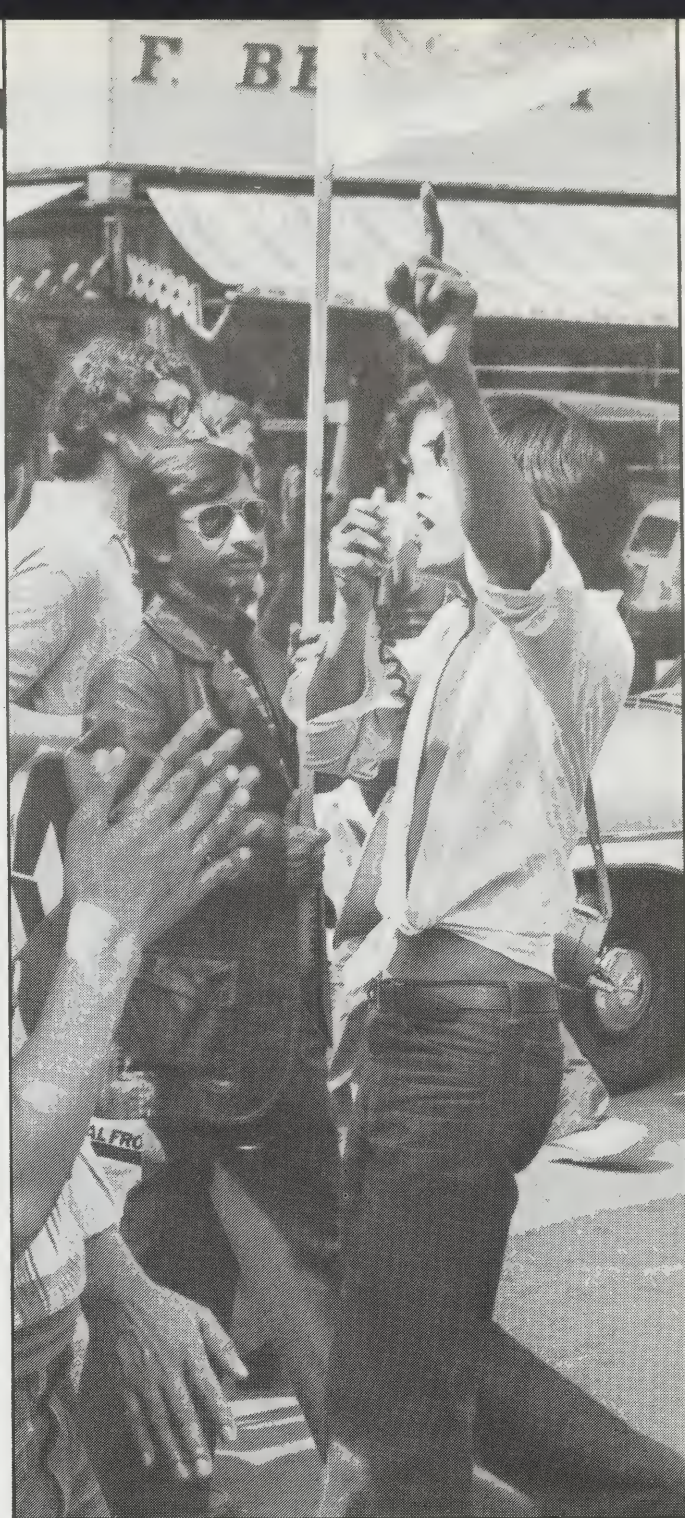
Commentators on the early strikes and walkouts of Asian labour were quick to note that the actions took place in those capitalist outfits which had no policy apart from recruitment and hard work for Asians. The race relations industry was in its infancy. The Ministry of Labour noted, in a paper researched for Barbara Castle, the Minister at the time, that patterns of recruitment enabled an Asian workforce to achieve a majority or a sizeable minority of themselves on one shop-floor. It warned against this development. Surprisingly enough, Paul Foot, a journalist of the Trotskyist left, took a similar, only more confused position: "Hysterical references to 'industrial ghettos' can be grossly exaggerated. But the Preston strike shows that where coloured workers cluster together in separate departments or factories, they lay themselves open to industrial struggles whose consequences can be widespread." (IRR Newsletter on Red Scar, July 1965). Lay themselves open?? Lay managements open, surely?? Is that just bad prose or a confused political pose?

After the experience of Red Scar, John Trode wrote in 'New Society' advocating more education by the union of their Asian workforces so as to avoid strikes. Paul Foot takes a similar position, concluding his article on the strike with the beginnings of a race relations policy: "If the Red Scar strike shocks management and unions into greater care over communication with and promotion of immigrant workers, its consequences may not be as disastrous as they once threatened to be." Disastrous for whom? Threatening to whom?

IWA AND THE ASIAN WORKER

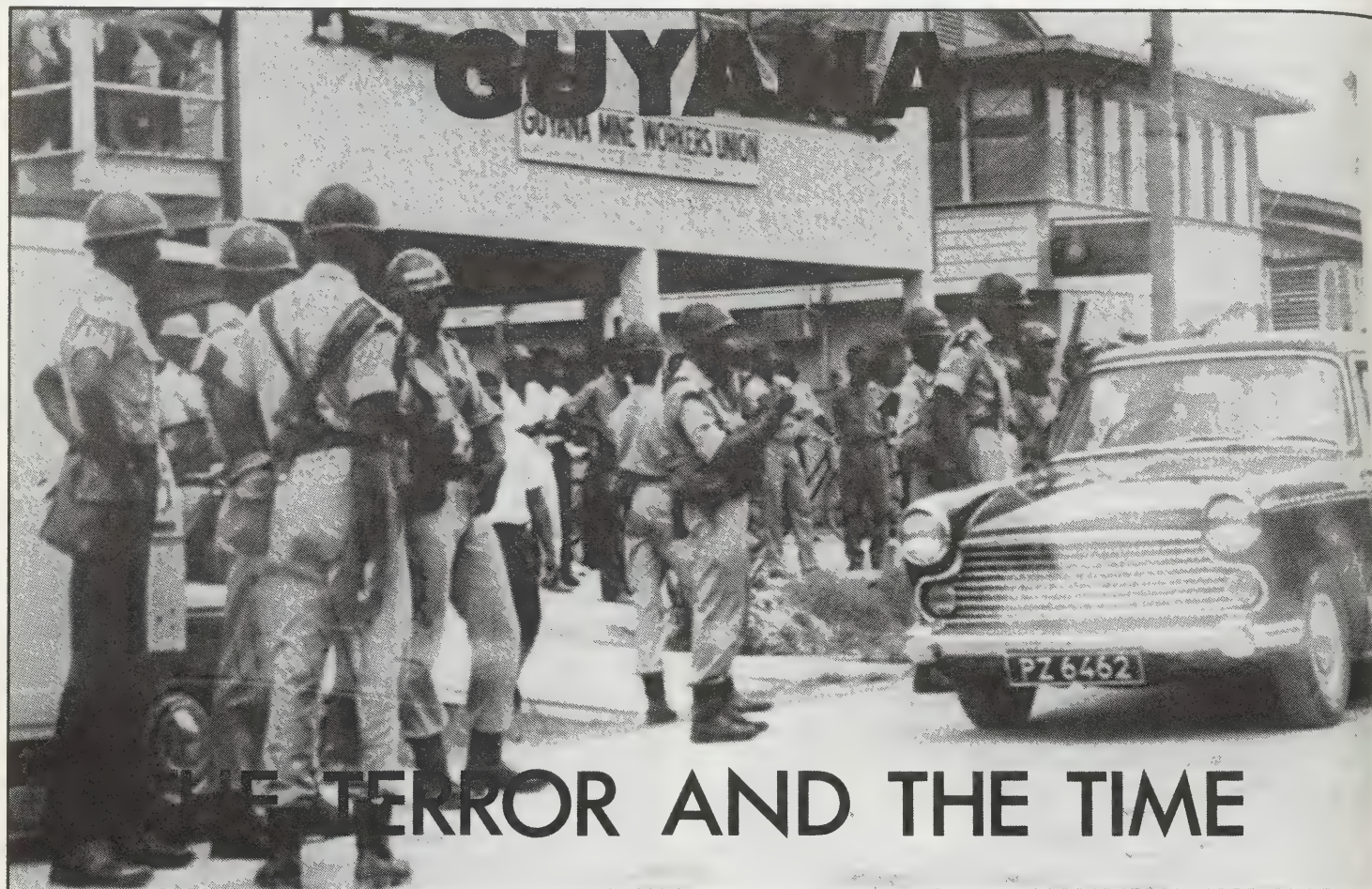
For Asian workers, going back to work after a partial defeat with an assurance of no victimisation from the management, Red Scar and Woolf's were among the first attempts at fielding an industrial power in Britain's working class which operated in spite of the union structures which gave a dubious legitimacy to action. To sociologise about the togetherness of the Asian workforce and their ability to collectivise their struggle through their community network, would be to state the obvious.

There is no doubt that the Indian Workers' Association played an instrumental part in these formative



years. It began life as a cultural and social focus, but faced with the insurrection of Asians on the shop floors of Britain's industries, transformed itself into a political organisation. Support was given to the shop floor revolts and it pronounced and demonstrated on issues affecting the immigrant population. However, its intervention, as a positive force in the newly emerging independent movement of black workers, was severely restricted. Its mass base was confined to Punjabi workers and the inherent internal splits in its political allegiances, along the lines of fracture in the Indian political scene, thousands of miles away, made it an unacceptable vehicle for the struggles of Asians from the African continent, who entered the milieu of British production in the 70's. It was unacceptable too for the young Asians who were born or grew up here who, in 1976, burst onto the political stage in Britain with an unprecedented force. Their slogan was, 'Come What May We are Here To Stay'.

BACKLASH



The political crisis, which has engulfed the Eastern Caribbean in the last four months, has spread to the state of Guyana.

On Wednesday, 11 July, at 3am, a bomb explosion destroyed the offices of the Ministry of National Development and the Guyana Sugar Corporation. A phone call was received by the security guard in attendance that a bomb had been planted in the Ministry of National Development and that the Guyana Defence Force would be sending some soldiers to check out the information.

Immediately after, three men in the uniform of the Guyana Defence Force entered the building, armed and wearing gas masks. They bound and gagged the guard, poured inflammables throughout, wired the building with explosives, set the place alight and made their escape.

Between 6am and 7.30am, police officers raided the houses of eight political activists. All but three were members of the revolutionary opposition group, the Working People's Alliance (WPA). All the activists were arrested.

The arrested were:

Dr. Walter Rodney, noted historian. He had been Associate Professor of History at the University of Dar-es-Salaam and was appointed Professor in the Department of History at the University of Guyana. The Government of Guyana intervened and cancelled his appointment despite international opposition.

Dr. Rupert Roopnarine, Head of the English Department at the University of Guyana.

Dr Omawale, former Head of the Department of Food and Nutrition at the University of Guyana and presently Consultant to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), based in Jamaica.

Bonita Bone, school teacher and leading trade unionist.

Kwame Apata, former postman and lecturer at the Potter College of Education.

Karen De Souza, a civil servant in the office of the Prime Minister.

Denzil Nandlall, student at the University of Guyana.

Dr. Maurice Odle, Head of the Insti-

tute of Development Studies at the University of Guyana.

In the first instance, it was assumed they were all detained under the National Security Act, Part Two of which provides for detention without trial. Rodney was detained at La Penitence Police Station on the outskirts of the capital city, others were held at Police Headquarters at Eve Leary in Georgetown. Eventually, Rodney was moved with other male detainees to Eve Leary and Omawale was shifted to Beterverwagting.

At once, members and supporters of the WPA mounted a vigil throughout the day until midnight at all detention points. The Organisation of Working People, an independent organisation condemned the detention of the eight. The University of Guyana Staff Association passed a resolution along similar lines. The Government of Guyana, therefore, was faced with an immediate internal response within hours of the detention.

The following day, Thursday, 12 July, the Working People's Alliance began to mobilise support internationally among

blacks in Britain, Canada, the USA and the Caribbean. Telegrams, fiercely protesting the government's political detention of the eight, began landing on the desk of the Guyanese Prime Minister and a picket was mounted at the Guyanese Embassy in New York. Internally, the WPA stepped up the picketing, by which time the population of Guyana had learned of the arrests through an external radio station, Radio Antilles, based in Montserrat. The detainees complained of the lack of toilet and sleeping facilities and no food.

By Friday, 13 July, the legal machinery was set in motion to obtain a writ of habeus corpus and the picketing intensified within Guyana. Pickets appeared in front of the Guyanese High Commission in London and a statement protesting the arrests and demanding the release of the detainees was handed to the High Commissioner. A meeting was also held in Springfield, Massachusetts, to protest the action of the Guyanese Government. On Monday, 16

On Friday, 13 July, Bonita Bone and Denzil Nandlall were released without charge.

On Saturday, 14 July, Rodney, Roopnarine and Omawale appeared in court charged with arson, presumably for being responsible for the fire and bomb explosion. Apata was charged with arson and unlawful possession of fire arms. Karen De Souza was charged with theft of an army kit.

The prisoners briefed leading counsel, Moses Bhagwan, to appear on their behalf. However, the regime was so determined to railroad the accused through the hearing without granting bail, that their defence counsel was not informed of the hearing. Fortunately, Bhagwan learned of the hearing on Radio Antilles.

The prosecutor objected to bail on the grounds that if the defendants were granted bail, there was the likelihood that investigations would be prejudiced. He also indicated that the evidence against the defendants was circumstantial.

bailed in the sum of \$5,000 G (£1,000), to appear on 17.8.79. De Souza was bailed in the sum of \$500 G (£100), to appear on 17.8.79 also.

Despite the fact that the regime attempted to pack out the courts with public servants, members of the public managed to get in. Once the charges were read out, members of the public walked out in protest at the ridiculousness of it all. After the court hearing, magistrate Parvattan was summonsed to the residence of the Prime Minister and lambasted for his decision to allow bail.

Meanwhile, outside of the court, the Working People's Alliance had mobilised some 4-500 people in support of the prisoners. Among the demonstrators were bauxite workers, who had travelled some 60 miles from Linden, the bauxite centre, to Georgetown. The demonstrators attempted to follow the police vehicle which was taking the prisoners to the Brickdam Police Station where bail would be processed. At this point, the police called out members of the House of Israel, armed with lethal weapons, to unleash an attack on the demonstrators.

The leader of the House of Israel, David Hill, the self-styled Rabbi Washington, is one of the many black American criminals wanted by the FBI and imported into Guyana by the Burnham regime and given facilities to form religious sects a la Jim Jones. In fact, they have been used systematically to provide Gairy-type gangs to attack opposition meetings and to terrorise activists who oppose the dictatorship of the Burnham regime. Let an ordinary Guyanese set the scene. In a letter to a friend in London, a 60 year old worker from Georgetown writes:

".....as far as the political situation here, my dear, all I know things are hard enough here. As much as we all know Guyana before, it's nothing to shout about. The government thinks it has a firm grip on the population here so they could do whatever they like and no one to say anything against them. Right now we are having a kind of organisation here who call themselves Church people. The Elder is one run away American by the name of Rabbi Washington. He gets his people to go hand in hand with this Burnham government and causing a lot of disturbance whenever the opposition tries to keep its meetings. The government is now drafting out its new constitution before the election which I understand is to be sometime around October or November of this year". (7.7.79)

The American Government refuses to apply for the extradition of David Hill and others.

While Washington's thugs attacked the demonstrators, the police stood idly by. Jesuit priest, Father Darke was fatally



Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham 1975

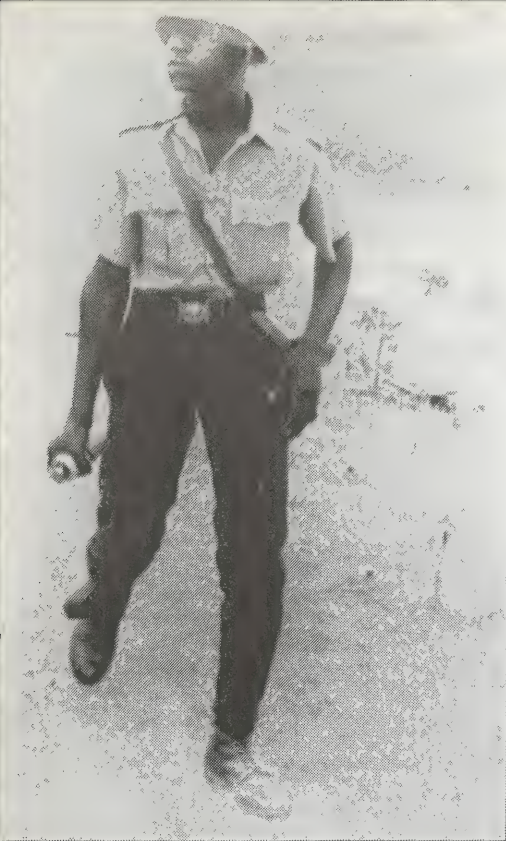
July, several demonstrators representing Guyanese groups and progressive groups in Holland, picketed the British Consulate, which represents Guyanese interests in Holland. The British Consulate-General refused to accept the letter of protest as he claimed to be only representing Guyanese economic interests. He directed the protesters to send the letter off to the Guyanese High Commissioner in London.

A combination of rising militancy within Guyana, growing international protests and a possible court confrontation on the question of habeus corpus, forced the government to lay charges, however trumped-up, and to release those not charged.

On Wednesday, 11 July, Dr. Maurice Odle was released on bail without charge.

Outbursts by Magistrate Pavarttan indicated the behind-the-scenes interference with the magistracy. Pavarttan, at one point, called for his minute book. The police officer handed him another document and whispered in his ear. Pavarttan replied, "I want my minute book. Don't tell me what to do. I would not allow anyone to tell me what to do. All morning people keep telling me what to do".

The defence reinforced their application for bail by citing a circular on bail issued by the Chancellor and comments from Judge Luckhoo. Pavarttan adjourned the hearing for ten minutes and returned to issue his judgement. The prosecutor's objection was described as weak and bail was granted to all the defendants. Rodney Roopnarine, Omawale and Apata were



stabbed in his back while he was taking photographs of Washington's thugs fraternising with police officers. Several other demonstrators were wounded and badly beaten up.

Michael James, Editor of the 'Catholic Standard' and his wife were beaten-up had to be hospitalised. A university student, Calvin Holder, who witnessed the stabbing of Father Darke, was held for three days and has since been released. Both the Press Association and the Caribbean Council of Churches issued strong protests against the murder of Darke, the vicious assault on James and his wife and the beating up of several others.

Over the same weekend, the WPA issued a statement, in which they warned, "The WPA, therefore, wishes to alert the Caribbean and world opinion to the fact that there is a real possibility of attempts at assassination of the brothers released on bail on Saturday as well as barristers at law, journalists and the rest of the WPA leadership".

The WPA goes on to quote statements from the PNC organ, 'The New Nation' They say, "Page seven of The New Nation carries staff written letters under the caption 'Exterminate The Rats From Our Society'. 'Our Steel Is Sharper Now'. The most important threat of all came from the PNC leader at the biennial conference of the Young Socialist Movement on June 29, when he called on them to 'exterminate the enemies of the Party'".

Investigations launched by the WPA reveal the real source of the bombings. On the day before the fire, a high PNC official got in touch with an official of the Bank of Guyana to ask for all the authorised signatories to the Ministry Of National Development account, as a fraud

was being investigated. No doubt the buildings were destroyed in order to conceal the corruption taking place in both organisations.

This is nothing new in the corrupt life of the Guyanese state, for it will be recalled that in 1975, the PNC Headquarters—Congress Place—was burnt down so as to prevent what auditing of the books would reveal.

Following the murder of Father Darke, and the mob attack of Rabbi Washington's terror squad, a section of the police force, responding to public indignation, arrested three members of the House of Israel. It is the first time that these thugs, who have been acting above the law, breaking up opposition meetings and attacking opposition members, have been brought to court.

Percival Jeffers, alias Bilal Ato, has been charged with the murder of Father Darke. One person was charged with malicious and felonious wounding and another with possession of dangerous weapons in public. They are being defended by lawyers attached to the ruling party, the PNC. All the defendants gave the House of Israel as their address.

On the Tuesday following some of the defendants appeared, unknown to the public, before what seems to have been a 'chosen' magistrate. Norma Jackman is known as a traffic magistrate, who deals exclusively with traffic offences. Two defendants pleaded guilty to felonious wounding and were fined a paltry sum of \$136 G (£27).

On Wednesday, four people, who were arrested at GUYBAU on the previous Sunday, were released without charge. They were all bauxite workers, one of whom is a member of the Organisation of Working People. On that very day, over 1,500 people attended the funeral of Father Darke. Hamilton Green, cousin of Prime Minister Burnham and PNC hench-

man, dared to attend the funeral. His presence was greeted with shouts of "Shame, Shame".

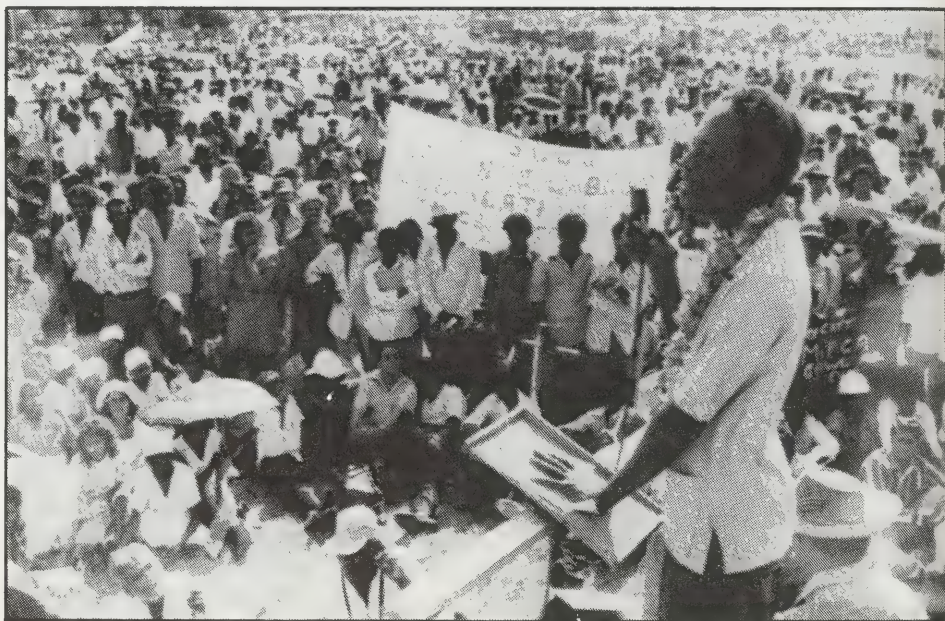
Opposition to the dictatorship of the Burnham regime has spread to the military. Recently, Colonel Pilgrim, a leading officer in charge of the day to day running of the Guyana Defence Force, in a speech to military cadets, said: "There are a number of powerful forces working against the professional skills of the military...when society goes into a state of confusion and disorder the military then becomes the hope of salvation."

In the midst of the agitation to free the detainees, the government announced the sacking of three senior army officers, Col. Pilgrim, Brigadier Clarence Price, Chief of Staff of the Guyana Defence Force and Col. Carl B. Morgan, Deputy Commander of the Guyana Defence Force. At once, some twenty three officers in the army tendered their resignation. These were refused.

Appointed to purge dissident forces, and perhaps to patch up a disintegrating military force, are Norman McClean, former Assistant Commissioner of Police and cousin of Mrs Viola Burnham, Col. David Granger, whose sister is head of the woman's wing of the People's Militia and again cousin of Mrs Viola Burnham and finally, Col. David Singh, a professional soldier.

On Friday, 20 July, the Working Peoples' Alliance held a public rally at Bourda Mall. It was one of the largest rallies Guyana has seen in recent times. Over 8,000 people of all ages, races and opinions attended. The main speakers were Walter Rodney and Rupert Roopnarine. The guest speaker was N. Motto of the Peoples' Progressive Party.

The meeting called for the resignation of the PNC government and pledged themselves to force the government to resign. The meeting also approved a call for a



of 'The New Nation'

caretaker government of national reconstruction and indicted the murderers of Father Darke—members of the House of Israel. They affirmed that there would be an all out struggle to achieve the above objectives.

The meeting warmly welcomed the Referendum 5 (those charged are known as the Referendum 5). They warmly endorsed the WPA's call that Rodney and Roopnarine were both symbols of repression and symbols of the future, especially since the Burnham regime had selected them from the younger part of the population and from the two major races.

A meeting of some 1,000 people was held in Buxton on similar lines. The meeting endorsed the feelings and sentiments of the Bourda Mall meeting. Other meetings are planned.

It is clear that the Burnham government is fighting for its political survival and, like its counterparts in Dominica, Grenada and, we shall see, in other Caribbean territories, excessive state brutality is on the order of the day. The Burnham government is bent on political murder and through its doctrine of 'paramountcy of the Party', attempts to control judge and jury.

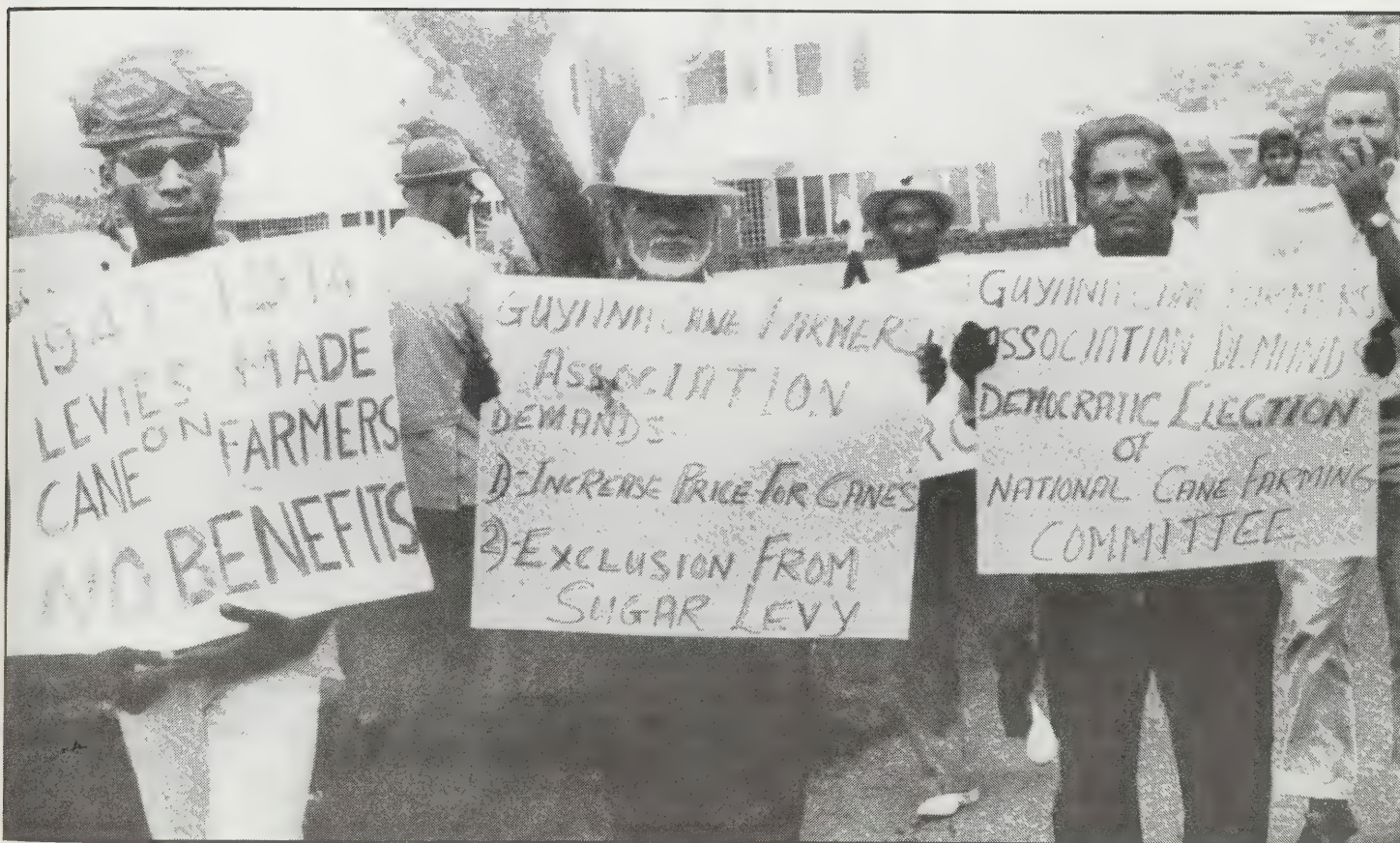
For this dictatorial policy, they seek international support. The Guyanese residents (UK) Southern Region, a front for the Guyanese High Commission, attempted a counter-picket at the Guyanese High Commission in London, on Monday, 16 July. They could muster only four people, suspected employees at the High



Commission. They issued the following statement: "Guyanese in the UK, therefore, support all attempts to remove from our midst these criminal dissidents who wish to retard the growth and propensity of our people and call upon the courts to mete out just penalties to these murderers and saboteurs when found guilty".

ity".

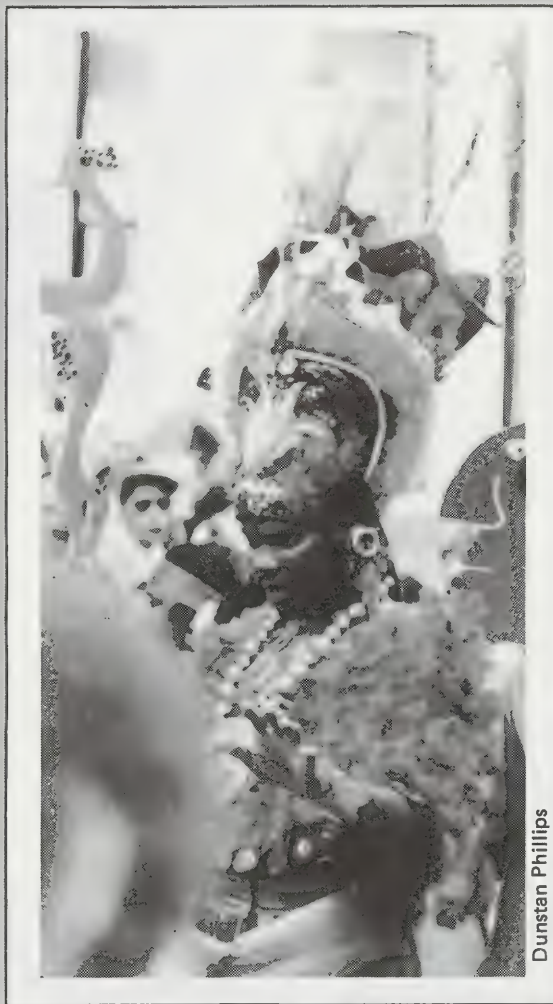
In response, the WPA has set up an International Defence Committee, with representatives in the US, Caribbean Islands, Canada, and here in Britain, with the aim of mobilising support for those charged and against the dictatorship of the Burnham regime.



CREATION

For Liberation

CARNIVAL REVIEW '79



Dunstan Phillips

In organising Carnival '79, three outstanding tasks faced the Carnival movement:

To produce, from within its ranks, a discipline, order and organisation over the Carnival weekend.

To isolate and defeat the hardliners within the police force who stood for massive saturation policing.

To present a display of artistic and cultural expression which would stand heads and shoulders above all that had gone before.

Should the movement fail in all or any one of these tasks, the hands of those who were determined to banish the Carnival off the streets of Notting Hill and into a park — any park — would have been greatly strengthened.

A cursory glance at the major news headlines in the weeks leading up to Carnival would illustrate the point:

"Curb The Carnival", 'Evening News', 18.6.79.

"Carnival Planning Problems", 'Daily Telegraph', 16.7.79

"Notting Hill Carnival Fear", 'Evening Standard', 19.7.79

"Ban Carnival From Streets", 'Evening Standard', 18.6.79.

With grace, confidence and dignity, the Carnival movement rose to the occasion, executing its responsibilities and much more under the leadership of the Carnival Development Committee

Strong foundations had been laid in the months before. As early as April 1979, the Carnival Development Committee had, at its Annual Conference, completed a process of reorganisation. In a press statement issued at the end of the conference, the C.D.C. informed of a fundamental amendment to its constitution: "The new constitution organises the General Council, the highest decision making body of the Carnival Development Committee, from four delegates of each of the different groups participating in Carnival. One delegate from each group constitute the Executive Council from which officers are elected."

The amendment aimed to further root the organisation deep within the ranks of Carnival activists.

Democracy breeds success. Above all else, the organisational leadership was drawn from the ranks of the mass of activists and

could be moved and guided by its base. No longer the spectacle of organisers suddenly appearing in the weeks before Carnival and disappearing again once their pockets were filled with loot.

The C.D.C.'s members met weekly throughout the year, and mobilised hundreds of carnivalists in weekly Jammorama cultural sessions at the Powis Square Tabernacle. These weekly sessions were a major source of fund raising, helping to extricate the organisers from the iron grip of those institutions which, in allocating grants to the festival, were bound to attempt to dominate policy.

The major planks of C.D.C. policy represented the wishes of the movement:

- * Carnival on the streets of Notting Hill
- * Low profile policing
- * Improved facilities for artistic development and presentation.

On the issue of improved facilities for artistic development and presentation, the C.D.C. turned its focus on the Arts Council of Great Britain. The Arts Council dispenses taxpayers' funds for artistic activities throughout the country. The Carnival qualifies. It is a theatrical spectacle and blacks pay taxes. Year after year, a measly sum is grudgingly doled out to the Carnival, and only at the last moment. The sum doled out reflects the colonial view of the Arts Council's officials towards Carnival. It is not art, they seem to be saying, but some exotic, minor community festival. As a result, Carnival was funded under the heading, 'Community Arts'.

The Carnival Development Committee opposed this categorisation in a series of meetings with officials from the Arts Council and won the demand that an ad hoc committee be set up to deal exclusively with the Carnival. Even so, despite promises of early and increased funding, the funds arrived late and continued to reflect a negative view of Carnival as a major artistic and cultural expression.

The discipline, order and organisation, which the Carnival movement was faced with producing, could not be accomplished by the waving of some magical wand. It is the practice of organising over the year, reinforced by consistent, democratic discussion and debate, which produced a body of people capable of taking the movement by the scruff of the neck to produce the finest festival ever.

The weekend began with the Panorama show at which, we were told, Britain's leading steelband would be chosen. Metronomes were the winners and rightly so. All the bands were well up on the latest calypsoes, their arrangements reflecting a greater degree of thought and discipline than in previous years. They were hampered, though, by a chronic shortage of good pan tuners. The poor quality of pans on display would indicate that the pan tuners in Britain range from the lower scale of mediocrity to the down right incompetent. It is in this area that our fellow panmen in North America and Trinidad can be of the greatest assistance.

Then followed the Calypso King contest at the Commonwealth Institute on Saturday evening. Carnival in Notting Hill, as elsewhere in Britain, has been starved of indigenous calypsoes which are traditionally composed for the occasion. In Trinidad and Tobago, the island is literally overrun by calypso tents at which scores of calypsonians entertain the public during the Carnival season. The compositions are the sole source of the music played by steelbands and other bands during the festival. To date, we have had to rely exclusively on calypsoes imported from Trinidad and Tobago.

The emergence, therefore, of a home-grown calypso tradition brings a completeness to the event. And how the carnivalists responded. For six weeks they gave consistent support, in their hundreds, to a group of five calypsonians who performed at the C.D.C.'s calypso tent. More than two thousand

enthusiasts flocked to the Calypso King contest at the Commonwealth Institute. It was a mediocre show by any standards. The lyrics were generally poor, so too were the musical arrangements, perhaps with the exception of Lord Cloak's 'Racial Discrimination' and 'Stray Way Pussy'. These criticisms are qualified by the fact that the calypso movement in Britain is just about laying its foundations. What has been demonstrated, though, is that thousands of carnivalists have declared their support for the new movement which leaves the road wide open for artistic development.

The Gala Performance at the Commonwealth Institute on Sunday evening delivered all that was promised. It was a preview of the grand street parade on the following day, bank holiday Monday. Characters from the themes of each band paraded the Central Galleries at the Commonwealth Institute, competing in several categories: King and Queen of the Bands, Best Individual (male and female), most outstanding traditional portrayal. They were judged by the leading Trinidadian carnivalists, Peter Minshall, Wayne Berkely and Joan Massiah. It was a show comparable with any theatrical spectacle in the United Kingdom.

Among the three thousand audience were visitors from the USA, Canada, Europe, the Caribbean. One of the characters on parade, the Plumed Serpent, was played by a visitor from Port of Spain, Trinidad.

The participants in the Panorama Competition, the Calypso King Contest, the Gala Performance were all amateurs, drawn largely from the Caribbean and black working class in Britain. Freed from the alienation that professionalism brings, they were instinctively in touch with their audiences. They were playing for those with whom they work and live socially. The shows were advertised by the players, who themselves organised the stage presentation, sold the refreshments, manned the doors and paid the bills.

The success of the shows, both financially and in artistic content, is indicative of the capacity of the black working class in Britain for self-organisation.

The Panorama, Calypso King Contest and the Gala Performance, though events central to the Carnival season, are in effect side shows, dwarfed by the parade of the bands on the streets on Sunday 26 and Monday 27.

On the Sunday, as they did on the following day, the police threw up a ring of steel around the Carnival area. Hundreds of police officers were penned in various public buildings in the heart of Carnival activities. This, senior police officers publicly described as relative profile policing. It was not the low police profile which the Carnival Development Committee had been demanding in the months leading up to Carnival.

There can be only two profiles — a high profile or a low profile, the term, 'relative profile', is but a disguise for the use of more than 5000 police officers in the Carnival area.

Disguise this fact, they must, because the original reason offered for the obscenely large numbers of police officers within Carnival, was the high crime rate. In the last two years, this has been considerably reduced. And following on from the barbaric behaviour of police officers at Southall, there has been a fall in public confidence in the ability of the Metropolitan police to police large gatherings of people without recourse to excessive brutality.

What was certainly a victory over the hardliners in the police force was a large reduction in the numbers of police officers who were visible. Undoubtedly too, there was a major transformation in the attitudes of police officers. They were excessively polite, helpful and by Monday afternoon had succumbed to the infectious atmosphere of the Carnival.

The author witnessed at least ten uniformed officers well and truly sloshed and scores more in a relative state of drunkenness.



By early Monday evening, the police manual had been discarded by hundreds of officers and mas was on the order of the day.

For those who expressed misgivings about the thousands of pounds spent on policing, we entirely agree. Carnival 1980 and the bill could be reduced by some 90%. For on both days, several police officers remained penned in public buildings when they could be enjoying the weekend with their families. The money ill-spent on policing must be made available for improved cultural facilities for our festival.

More than 75,000 people attended Sunday's Carnival which is traditionally a low key affair, a warm up for the street parade on the following day at which 150,000 people attended.

The Carnival Development Committee advertised that some twelve bands would pass its judging point in Powis Square.

The inventiveness of the costume designers has developed by leaps and bounds. They are no longer restricted by the shortage of players. Their confidence has increased in proportion to the numbers of those who are willing to play mas.

Ebony's incursion into astral fantasy was a bold and imaginative production, rivalled in that category only by Sukyua's glamorous interpretation of the Court of Negus. Defending champions, Race Today/Mangrove Renegades and the North London based Lion Youth, stuck to their revolutionary traditions. Renegades portrayed The Life and Times of Emiliano Zapata, the Mexican revolutionary, incorporating the indigenous Mayan Indians. They were judged Band of the Year for the second successive year.

Lion Youth's War Cry recalled moments in wars of liberation in Caribbean history. Both themes made room for the twinning of political attitudes and artistic innovation.

In no way were the bands dominated by Trinidadians. The Dominican and Grenadian community evoked the old traditions in Carnival, with their portrayals of Shortnee and Tete Cassee. And what an outstanding debut for The Factory band, a group of young British blacks who dramatised their Fantasies out of Hell.

The Mangrove Social Club, whose leading members have recently emerged victorious in a lengthy trial at the Knightsbridge Crown Court, drew on all their reserves to organise two days of street entertainment on All Saints Road. It is one of the central points in the Carnival area.

Sukyua was judged the Best Costumed Band and Spoilers the Best Music Band at the Mangrove Competition.

Order and discipline allowed those who were entertained at the Mangrove to identify Carnival '79 as the best ever.

It is not the case that the Carnival movement had a clear run in organising Carnival 1979. Opposition ranged from the news media, members of parliament, the all powerful Arts

Council, the CRE to sections of the police force — a powerful line up of official opposition.

In the weeks leading up to Carnival, the national newspapers indulged in scare stories of violence and splits between the Carnival Development Committee and the officially sponsored but irrelevant Carnival and Arts Committee. Come the end of Carnival and they were eating their words. They could hardly contain themselves as they clambered over each other to shout their praises. Even so, they could not conceal the fact that there exists a massive illiteracy in their ranks about the structure and artistic content of our theatrical spectacle. They have had nigh on fifteen years to acquaint themselves with the structure of an event which attracts, regularly, some quarter of a million spectators and thousands of players. In all the interviews given by the author to journalists, not one of them knew what a band was, how a theme is organised, what participants do on the day. There are suggestions that an ABC of Carnival be produced to educate journalists. What a cheek! It is the responsibility of journalists to find out and to review the artistic content of the festival in the same way that the arts are treated in the national press.

Both the Arts Council and the CRE continue to sponsor opposition to the Carnival Development Committee.

Without funds from both these bodies, the Carnival and Arts Committee will cease to be the nuisance it is. Until last year, the Arts Council and the CRE justified their funding of the CAC by advancing that the committee emerged from the local community and were representative of it. These funding organisations will have to perform the most remarkable somersault to explain a Notting Hill based Committee with two major officials who live and work in East London and another in North London.

Again, it seems a simple matter to measure a committee's validity by its ability to raise support from within the movement it claims to represent. The Carnival and Arts Committee has not been able to raise one single penny of its own funds throughout the year. Instead, they depend exclusively on the Arts Council and the CRE to finance their mischief. And mischief they did create.

As per usual, they herded hundreds of young blacks under the fly over in Acklam Road for entertainment up to 11 pm on Monday evening. Yet, with two hours to go, they allowed senior police officers to bring the celebrations to a halt.

In the face of a gamut of official opposition and intrigue, 100,000 people proclaimed that they want Carnival on the streets of Notting Hill and a disciplined force has emerged to organise it. It is a fine testimony to the artistic ingenuity and organisational strength of the Carnival movement.

RESULTS OF THE COMPETITIONS ORGANISED BY THE CARNIVAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

BAND OF THE YEAR

- (Sponsored by 'Time Out' magazine)
1. Life and Times of Emiliano Zapata
(Race Today/Mangrove Renegades)
 2. Symbols of the Sky Worshipers
(Ebony)
 3. Fantasy out of Hell
(Factory)

PANORAMA

1. Metronomes
2. Paddington Youth
3. Ebony

GALA PERFORMANCE

MOST OUTSTANDING TRADITIONAL BAND:
Shortnee

**MOST OUTSTANDING TRADITIONAL
KING AND QUEEN:**
Shortnee

BEST PORTRAYAL:
Hunch Back of Notre Dame

MOST ORIGINAL COSTUME:

Leafy Marroon
(Lion Youth's War Cry)

INDIVIDUAL FEMALE:

1. Galaxy
(Ebony's Symbols of the Sky Worshipers)
2. Red Star
(Ebony's Symbols of the Sky Worshipers)
3. Lightening
(Ebony's Symbols of the Sky Worshipers)

INDIVIDUAL MALE:

1. Mongolian King
(Vernon Fellows)
2. Mayan God
(Race Today/Mangrove Renegades)
Life and Times of Emiliano Zapata)
3. Star Worshiper
(Ebony's Symbols of the Sky Worshipers)

KING OF THE BANDS

1. Sun God
(Ebony's Symbols of the Sky Worshipers)

2. Plumed Serpent
(Race Today/Mangrove Renegades)
3. King Devil
(Factory's Fantasy Out of Hell)

QUEEN OF THE BANDS:

1. Shooting Star
(Ebony's Symbols of the Sky Worshipers)
2. Queen of Negus
(Sukuya's Court of Negus)
3. Mayan Goddess
(Race Today/Mangrove Renegades)
Life and Times of Emiliana Zapata)

MANGROVE SOCIAL CLUB'S COMPETITION BEST COSTUMED BAND:

1. Court of Negus
(Sukuya)
2. Life and Times of Emiliano Zapata
(Race Today/Mangrove Renegades)
3. Symbols of the Sky Worshipers
(Ebony)

BEST MUSIC BAND:

1. Spoilers
2. Metronomes
3. Ebony

The Schoolmaster



The Schoolmaster.

by Earl Lovelace with an introduction by
Kenneth Ramchand

Published by Heinemann Price £1.20

Reviewed by Eden Charles

The story is set in the small village of Kumaca, north-east Trinidad, eleven miles of mountain track away from the nearest village of Valencia. It is a small, virtually isolated, self-contained community, situated in an area of intense beauty and naturalness which Lovelace evokes sensitively throughout the novel, providing a contrast to the ugliness of the actions of some of the characters.

With the news that a road is to be built linking Kumaca with Valencia, and hence to the outside world of the twentieth century, the villagers realise that they must prepare themselves for the inevitable. The majority of the villagers see the building of a school as the only way to equip the village, particularly its young, with the ability to survive in the competitive world of 'progress'. After much debate, and despite Constantine Patron's fears of the effect that the school could have on the social fabric of the village, the decision to build the school is taken. But.

"Who will teach in the school?

And where will we build the school? Who will pay for the building? Do we have the money to pay? And will we have to pay to learn in the school? Who will pay the schoolmaster?"

It is unfortunate, but almost inevitable that the villagers turn to the church to provide answers to these questions. This has its consequences:

"If it is to carry the name of the church, then we will pay the upkeep of the school, and we must provide the teachers, and of course the building must be vested in the church. It will belong in name to the church."

The church appoints the schoolmaster, who, though black is very different from the people of the village. A fact which does not escape them. He brings with him an entirely different way of life. That which was once natural and spontaneous, he regimented and formalises. The informal meetings at Dardain's shop become village council meetings, performing the same function ostensibly, ie, running the affairs of the village, but in a way that begins the

process of alienation from self and the initiation into meaningless formality, characteristic of modern hierarchical bureaucracy. There is a scene in the book which beautifully illustrates this point when Father Vincent, returns to the village on the first of his quarterly visits after the setting up of the school:

"At the schoolhouse, Father Vincent could only sit on his ass and gape. There lined in two rows were the villagers, big and small; men and women, wearing fixed smiles on their faces that reminded the priest

with a touch of guilt and pain of his own mechanical smile. At the head of the lines, at the door of the open schoolhouse proud and grand in a grey suit, polka-dot bow-tie, grey felt hat, rimless spectacles, his face serious, and stance military, stood the schoolmaster. Father Vincent, before he could get over his surprise and come to himself, saw the schoolmaster lift his hands, gesturing like the conductor of the London Philharmonic, noticed that there was a switch in his right hand, saw the switch go up with a sharp, rather precise, yet over-bearingly dramatic and somehow graceful movement, heard the first notes of the hymn, 'Come, Holy Ghost' burst upon his ears".

But the introduction of a new social order has tragic as well as comic results. The beautifully constructed love story between Christina and Pedro is full of the same optimism, that the village as a whole has for a bright new tomorrow. The rape of Christiana by the schoolmaster and her subsequent suicide end all illusions, — the future will bring at least as many problems as did the past.

A word must be said of Lovelace's skill at his craft. In writing about peasants he has chosen an often neglected, but significant section of Caribbean society which most West Indians can relate to. Something of the rhythms of the life and consciousness of the people is captured and reflected in his characters in a way that is always a pleasure to read.

Lovelace paints his characters with poignant brush strokes. They are all human, even Father Vincent. Each has human weaknesses and most have human nobility. Benn is not just a drunken don-

key owner, he is a philosopher and a man who once owned a beautiful black horse, which he loved. In an effort to retain his manhood, he gave it to his white West Indian employer Captain Grant, who had offered to buy it from him, an offer which acquires its true meaning when we realise, as Benn did, that if his employer did not have the horse then he would not have a job to go to the next day. Benn is a drunkard, not because he cannot see what he is doing to himself and his family, but because he can see what has been done to him.

This novel, despite its description of the immorality of the new social order, is not a condemnation of progress. Rather, it is a questioning of the type of people who have traditionally led and defined the road to progress in the West Indies. Neither is it a pessimistic book. In the youth of the West Indies — represented by Pedro — lies an 'awesome unused energy', that will learn from the experiences of previous generations and ensure, by their actions, that to a much greater extent, they will control and define the form that progress takes.

This book so totally involved and moved me, that when I finished reading it, I just felt quiet and wanted to be on my own. Humour, romance, drama are all there, all the correct ingredients. But a novel, like most things, must be more than the sum total of its parts if it is to be special. And this book is special. It is a tender, moving masterpiece. When somebody asked me what I thought of the novel all I could say was "Boy, this is a book — read it".

OLIVE MORRIS

1952-1979

Olive Morris, political activist and community worker died in St. Thomas Hospital after a long illness. She was buried at Streatham Crematorium on July 21, 1979.

A memorial meeting for her was held at the Abeng Centre on July 29, 1979.

JAMAICA LULLABY

(In memory of Olive Morris)

So soon
the moon
rises tonight,
making fire
making sparks
to pierce spots of dark;

stars gather gold
making holes
in the vast body of night;
dogs begin
their ritual barks
and howls as fowls
steal sleep to meet
tomorrow face to face.

So soon
the moon
rises tonight
meeting screams
shouts of lies
as hard black fists
finds labour's most
devout female flesh
whose sweat whose hurt
now makes a tear.

Tears will
roll down
sorrow's crevices
will flow down to
heart's hurt.

Now the sobbing
rest awhile.
Believers sin
God dreams
cats, rats,
babies scream for food;

the hungry
earth dreams too
for just a drop of rain
so as to breathe again
and give birth or sap
to dying roots.

So soon
the rain of dew
on sleeping green of grass;
the memories hearts are keeping
will soon slide down in dreams
when no one sleeps
but close their eyes and weep.

(c) Linton Kwesi Johnson

The Friends

The Friends

Rosa Guy



The Friends

by Rosa Guy

Published by Penguin Books Price 60p

Reviewed by Eden Charles

This interesting book by Rosa Guy, a black American writer, is set in the black ghetto of Harlem, New York. Phyllisia, the central character, is a West Indian girl who has trouble mixing with the pupils in her class, who, with one exception, hate her and regard her as a snob. The reasons why they do so go beyond the fact that

she is West Indian. Her attitudes to school reflects the values of the older West Indian immigrants, who believe that education can be a means of social advancement. The 'you-can-make-it-if-you-try' ideology has been exposed for the vast majority of indigenous Afro-Americans.

Despite her need for friends, Phyllisia initially spurns the attempts to establish friendship made by tough, lovingly rebellious Edith. Even when Edith saves her from physical assaults by her classmates, she is still reluctant to associate herself with one who dresses so badly, who looks so poor and scruffy. Though imagining herself ugly and unattractive, Phyllisia believes that her father owns a large expensive restaurant. This must mean therefore, that despite the attraction that she feels for Edith, she is of too high a social rank to mix with the likes of her. Her father reinforces this impression when he warns her against mixing with Edith:

"... Your friend, huh? But you playing with me. You think I bring you to this man's country and set you down in good surroundings so you can make friends of these ragamuffins. Julst let me catch you with that girl again. And not only she, but any other one that look like she. See what happens to that fast little tail of yours. It will be so hot with fire that you will pray for the gates of hell!"

Given that we experience events through Phyllisia's eyes then, this book, insofar as it deals with some of the realities of native Afro-American life, does so from the perspective of an outsider looking in. This is not a criticism, only a comment, because one result of Rosa Guy's approach is that she avoids the pitfalls of those clichéd books that 'tell-it-like-it-is' in the ghetto.

What we have is a story that deals with a West Indian girl growing up in a strange environment that she cannot cope with. Her mother is dying of cancer and her father is arrogantly unreachable. The friendship she gradually establishes with Edith, — she tragically betrays. Her sister is much prettier than she is and has plenty of friends and admirers. Some of her problems are obviously the self created traumas of adolescence, but others are far more real and permanent.

In dealing with Phyllisia's experiences, Rosa Guy has constructed an engaging story that will grip adults and children alike. People of all races and classes will recognise features of their own childhood here. It is, in its own terms an enjoyable and moving book and I would not place myself amongst any who would question Rosa Guy's technical proficiency.

It is a fact that the black liberation movement has achieved a transformation of perspectives in literature written by and about blacks. Of course we still have works which insist on portraying blacks as strangely passive creations who have things done to them, which they might respond to, but, who are incapable of in-

itiating anything themselves. Increasingly, however, literature is being produced which is either the work of the oppressed themselves, from their own viewpoint, or which seeks to represent itself as such.

This switch in perspective is a direct reflection of the strength of the black movement, culturally, economically and politically. Today, the black writer, who does not have or purport to have, some understanding and/or experience of black

grass roots culture, is not published.

Though I enjoyed the book, it is important to state that this is not the authentic voice of the oppressed either. Nor does it reflect their self activity and confidence. It is just a good book that will have a greater chance of selling in these days of the multi-cultural literature market.

Reviewed by
Eden Charles

Bogle~L'Ouverture TENTH ANNIVERSARY

In October 1968 the English-speaking Caribbean echoed the cry for Black Liberation which rang from the streets of Jamaica. One year later, a family of Blacks, who were active in Black community work, responded to the general need for an independent Black publishing concern which could be a medium of expression for the growing voice of Blacks and other oppressed peoples. Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications was born in that period, and owes its name to the Peoples Uprising in Jamaica in 1865 led by Paul Bogle and the Haitian Revolution led by Toussaint L'Ouverture.

This year, Bogle-L'Ouverture is ten years old. On November 10, at the Commonwealth Institute, Friends of Bogle-L'Ouverture will share with the Black community in London the tenth anniversary of an independent Black publishing concern in Britain which has survived on the support of the Black community and supporters from throughout the world. In this way we have avoided, unlike so many other organisations, being dependent on state funds for survival. It was in November 1969, that Bogle-L'Ouverture published its first title — 'The Groundings with my Brothers' by Walter Rodney (fourth reprint). Since then Bogle-L'Ouverture has gone on to publish a number of titles, the most well known being 'How Europe Underdeveloped Africa' by Walter Rodney, now in its fourth reprint with translations in several languages. Bogle-L'Ouverture has also published works by Andrew Salkey, Accabre Huntley, Linton Kwesi Johnson's 'Dread Beat And Blood' (second reprint), to name a few.

As a small publisher, surviving on many hours of unpaid labour, Bogle-L'Ouverture has responded to the need for alternative literature which breaks with the pattern of racist stereotypes in publishing, and the dominance of the multinationals in the African and Caribbean market. Together with New Beacon Books who pioneered Black publishing

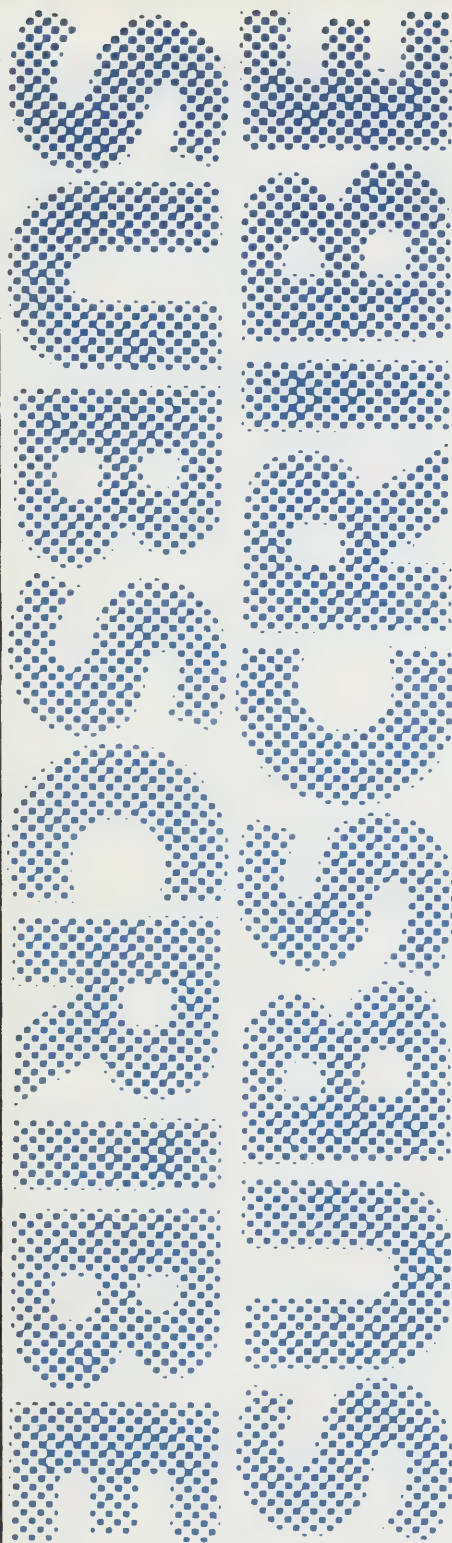
and bookselling in Britain, we have set the pace for a number of other bookshops and booksellers which are to be found in the Black community throughout the UK.

Bogle-L'Ouverture is not simply a London based publisher and bookseller; it is an important centre of Black community activities with links in the Caribbean, Africa and America. It is this kind of publishing, coupled with committed political work, which made Bogle-L'Ouverture a target for racist and fascist attacks. However, in spite of these attacks, Bogle-L'Ouverture has survived to supply those progressive elements in the wider community with books on the Caribbean, Africa, Black America and Asia. As school and library suppliers, Bogle-L'Ouverture provides a wide range of children's literature so that the concerned parent/teacher can make use of new materials on Black People. With the continuing development of Black liberation struggles throughout the world, Bogle-L'Ouverture looks forward to the next decade with every confidence in the knowledge that our work is both necessary and important.

The experience of the past ten years will be shared with the wider community during the four months of activities, viz. lectures, poetry, art exhibitions, films, book exhibitions and cultural show.

Details about the events for the tenth Anniversary are available from Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications.

For further details or information, please contact us at,
35 Valetta Road,
Acton,
London W3.
or
Bogle-L'Ouverture Bookshop
5a Chignell Place,
Ealing,
London,
W13 OTJ.
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LEEDS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION COMMUNITY EDUCATION WARDEN – CHAPELTOWN COMMUNITY CENTRE

Applications are invited for the post of full-time Warden at Chapeltown Community Centre, which serves the inner-city, multi-racial Chapeltown area of Leeds.

The person appointed will be responsible for initiating, developing and co-ordinating the programme of activities of the Centre, working closely with the Management Committee of the centre.

Salary: – Within Scale 3 of J.N.C.

Report (subject to qualification).

Application forms and further details from Director of Education (ref. FE/C/22), Department of Education, Great George Street Leeds. 1.

To be returned within 14 days of the appearance of this advert.

YORKSHIRE ASSOCIATION FOR BOYS' CLUBS AND LEEDS EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Leader-in-Charge, Chapeltown Boys' Club

Applications are invited from persons with appropriate qualification for this new post. The club is a new building in a multi-racial area.

Salary: J.N.C. Scale IIID

£5,115 – £5,694 plus supplements

Applications and further details from: Director of Education (FE/C/19)
Department of Education, Great George Street, Leeds LS1 3AE.

Returnable within two weeks of the appearance of this advertisement.

West Midlands Arts – ETHNIC ARTS RESEARCHER

West Midlands Arts invites applications from anyone interested/involved in Ethnic Minority Arts. This post is funded by Manpower Services Commission and, therefore, applicants should have been registered unemployed for at least six months (12 months if over 24 years old). The post will be Birmingham based and will run until 1 May 1980.

For further details write to Jane Wilson, West Midlands Arts, Lloyds Bank Chambers, Market Street, Stafford ST16 2AP. Applications by 3 October. Interviews 11 October.

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National Youth Bureau

The National Resource Centre and forum for youth affairs and social education of young people.

YOUTH WORK UNIT

Youth Service Information Officer
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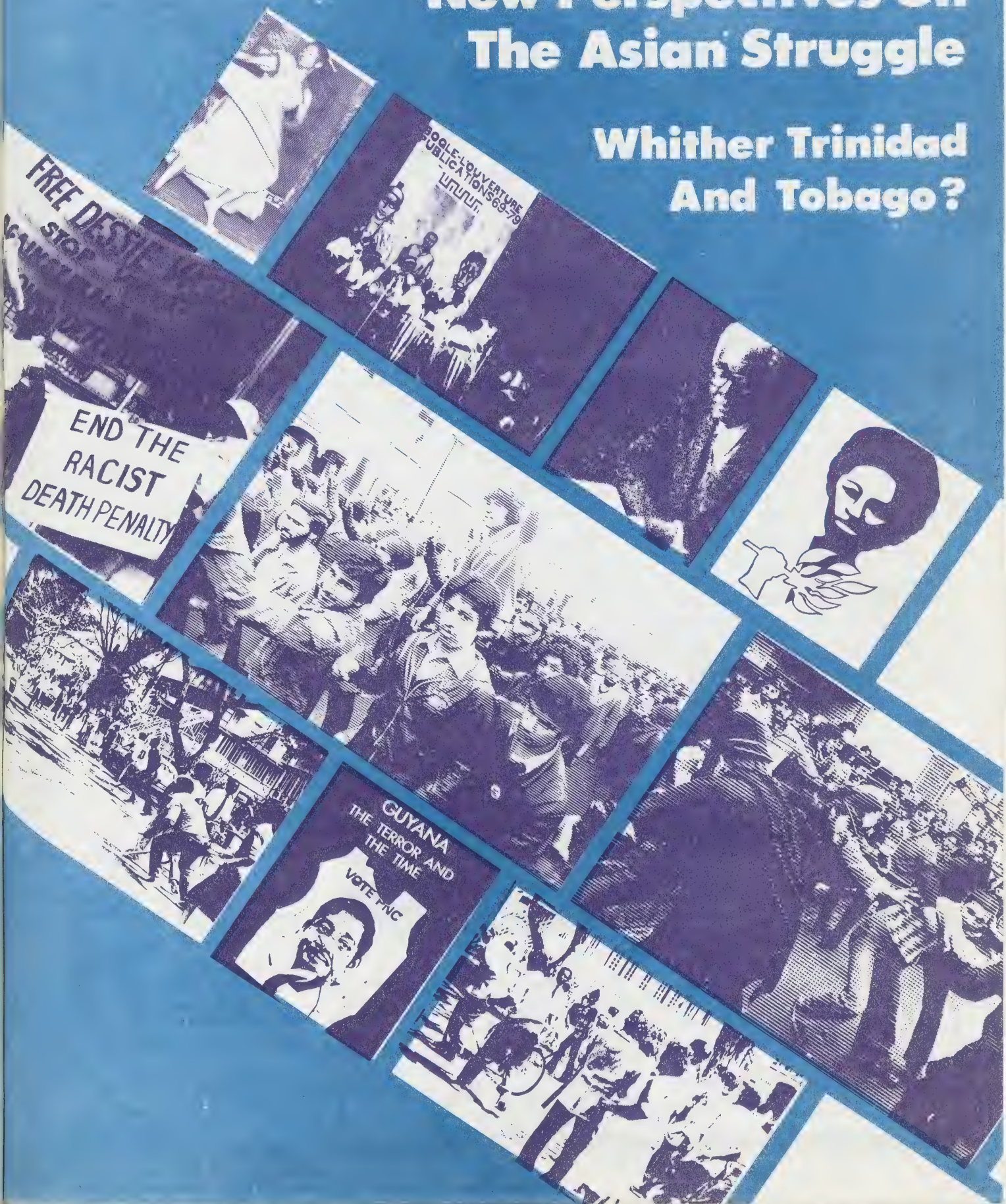
Salary scale AP4
£4,644 – £5,067

Further details and application form from the Director, National Youth Bureau, 17-23 Albion Street, Leicester.
Telephone: Leicester 554 775

VOICE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN BRITAIN NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1979 25P

VOICE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN BRITAIN NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1979 25P

Whither Trinidad And Tobago?



The Events in Union Island

Dear Race Today,

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a nation made up of several islands. It became independent on October 27, 1979. General Elections on December 5, 1979 saw the return of the St. Vincent Labour Party to power. Two days after the elections, an armed uprising occurred on Union Island against neglect and against foreign control of that island. The uprising has been crushed, a group of 31 persons who have been arrested include teenaged high school children and Rastafarians. The Prime Minister Milton Cato declared a state of emergency, clamped on a dusk to dawn curfew on the whole state and received a 48 member armed force from Barbados in answer to his call for help.

During this period, on Sunday December 16, at about 5 a.m. an armed squad comprising eight members of the Barbados defence force and five Vincentian police under the command of A.S.P. Theopileus Jackson raided a building at Diamond Village owned by Winston Butler which also houses a joint office and seminar room of ARWEE/R.T.C. (Rural Transformation Collective). They claimed that they were searching for arms, ammunition and marijuana. Neither of these were found. Instead they broke and entered the office of these organisations and seized about 400 publications valued around EC\$ 10,000. Included were all the material for DACAY (a children's programme), the Health and Nutrition materials and the socio-economic Resource literatures. ARWEE's Farm Manager and Technology Co-ordinator, Winston Butler, was detained without charge. He has subsequently been charged with possession of seditious and undesirable literatures - by which is meant, literature of socialist nature.

It is to be noted that the localised uprising of Union Island has been totally localised and was effectively crushed in one day. The immediate despatch of Barbados troops and the use of these troops

in intimidatory armed marches through villages and in this unprovoked raid and disruption of our work is a clear sign of the kind of administration, the Cato Government will run. The Government has 11 of the 13 elected parliamentary seats.

Oscar Allen
Diamond
St Vincent

International Action

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I work with the San Francisco Bay Area chapter of the National Anti-Racist Organising Committee which grew out of the Bay Area National Committee to Overturn the Bakke Decision, although I am just writing as an individual not for my organisation. The NAROC is part of a broader movement forming now to combat the growing political influence and terror tactics of the racist Ku Klux Klan, (doubtless you've heard of their recent massacre of 5 progressives in North Carolina). As NAROC has no experience of this type of campaign before, we are trying to figure out what our orientation, goals and methods will be.

Thinking about it recently, our situation seemed to me to resemble the situation in England a few years ago with the anti-immigrant hysteria, the growth of the racist-fascist National Front and the multi-faceted movement to combat it. So I wondered if we could draw on your experiences and I've looked through a stack of papers and found your address as well as a few other groups. If you have available any analyses or summations on the struggles against the NF I would appreciate it a lot if you could send me some of them.

In Solidarity,
Jeff Goldthorpe
San Francisco, Calif. 94103

LETTERS

Railton Struggle

Dear Race Today,

May I draw your attention to certain inaccurate statements or impressions contained in the article "Victory For The Brixton Youth" about the Railton Youth Club in your May/June issue?

The Inner London Education Authority was not involved in the decision to close the Club, but was asked by the Church Authorities to withdraw its staff. Railton Youth Club is a voluntary organisation sponsored by the Methodist Church, and the ILEA has no power to close the Club. Nor was the Authority involved in any "conspiracy" to close the Club and no such evidence has been brought forward.

The ILEA officers did not appear at the Club with a suspension order for the Senior Worker. The order was conveyed by letter to Mr Madray at his home, following the receipt of official complaints from the Methodist Church authorities. Mr Madray was subsequently instructed not to attend the Club during his period of suspension. At the hearing before the Industrial Tribunal, ILEA officers were asked to meet the Management Committee to hear their views and this was done. Mr Madray's case is not to go before a tribunal of enquiry which is being set up by the Authority.

The Authority at no time issued "dispersal notices for the rest of the staff" and the staff were not dispersed. The ILEA continued to pay the staff and began to discuss with them suitable alternative placements following the closure of Railton Youth Club.

Since the re-opening of the Club, the Authority's officers have been discussing with the Chairman of the Management Committee and the acting Senior Youth Worker, a revised programme of activities and the leadership staffing needs during the period of Mr Madray's suspension.

Yours faithfully,
D.J. McGlynn
Principle Youth Officer
ILEA

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TEMBA THEATRE CLUB

New Production

"Teresa" is a comedy by Alton Kumalo about the dilemmas confronting black women in Britain.

Showing At

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details: 402-5081 26 Mar- 1 Mar

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details: 56 Brixton Hill, SW2

Oval House Theatre Club 5 Mar-9 Mar
details: 735-2786

The Political Pantry Is Bare

As we face the 1980's, one single political fact confronts the black community in Britain. The political pantry is bare. By that we mean, there is no force within the portals of governmental economic and social power which can be called upon to campaign, to crusade, to rally other forces for a policy which would rid the black community of the oppression we face.

No single politician, no trade unionist, no capitalist (there is a total absence of socialists), no social organisation, no campaigning journalist, not anybody. No Wilberforce, no Fenner Brockway, no Aneurin Bevan, the horizon is bleak.

No insight even into what we have thought and done in the twenty-five years we have lived and worked in Britain. All that appears from the pens of journalists, from the mouths of politicians, are trivia and a distortion of living reality. Articles which ought to be in any editor's dustbin appear in the press about multi-racial love lives, about the first black police inspector, about anything which is both superficial and irrelevant to the depth and breadth of the black working classes search for creativity, order and organisation. It would be a mere humbug if it were not accompanied by the power of army, police and legislative muscle.

The outsider might well, in the circumstances, hold the view that all is well with blacks in the state of Britain, that there is no cause for concern; that in fact, we are living in a utopia. The opposite is true.

In the face of the explosion of Asian workers, demanding an end to colonial working conditions, from Mansfield Hosiery through Grunwick, no consistent political programme has emerged from those vested with the power and responsibility so to do. An odd intervention here, the issuing of a press statement there, are all that has punctuated a deafening silence.

Where is the political attitude, far less policy, which will extricate the Bengalis and Punjabis in the East End and Southall from racist violence and SPG oppression? Narry a word. And what to do, when young West Indians, have stated with such clarity on the streets of Notting Hill, in the summer of 1976, that the stranglehold must be broken? Again a momentous silence.

When Meena is denied her right to marry Rahim, by edict of a British Parliament, unless she courts and fornicates British style, only a hint of opposition is heard and the matter is allowed to rest.

Every class, every colonial people, who are excluded from the class or social grouping which holds power, must at some moment scour the political pantry, there to find out whether the powerful can deliver the nosh or not. If they can, then they can expect your allegiance, even in part. If they can't, then the confrontation is on against a bankrupt social economic and political system.

It is at this precise point that the black working class stands in Britain today.

It has not always been so. Those British governments which have held power since the Second World War had to reorder entire areas of political policy to deal with the insurgent colonial peoples in India, Africa and the Caribbean. Macmillan titled his policy 'The Wind of Change' as he was forced to and conceded political independence. Through less muted, governments were forced to incorporate the needs of the white, British working classes, in the distribution of revenue.

No more hunger marches. The white working classes in Britain had to have employment, had to be housed, to be clothed, had to have free medical care, free education etc. etc.

Even the Tory party was forced to do some house cleaning. Rab Butler brought them out of their hide-bound reactionary arrogance into the realities of working class power, a power that was being exercised with increasing confidence in the modern age.

New rights became a common-place in the new political age. The right of colonial peoples to be independent, the right of the white working classes to work, the rights to free education and legal advice, the right to strike and to picket — primarily or secondarily.

Successive governments since the mid-sixties set in train a process which began with the pecking at these rights under the second Wilson government to a veritable devouring of them under Mrs Thatcher.

It is in this historical atmosphere of the SPG, jury vetting, mass unemployment that the political pantry appears bare for blacks in Britain. It will become progressively bare for white workers as well.

We, blacks and whites, have only ourselves and our embryonic organisations which can express the working class potential power at our disposal.

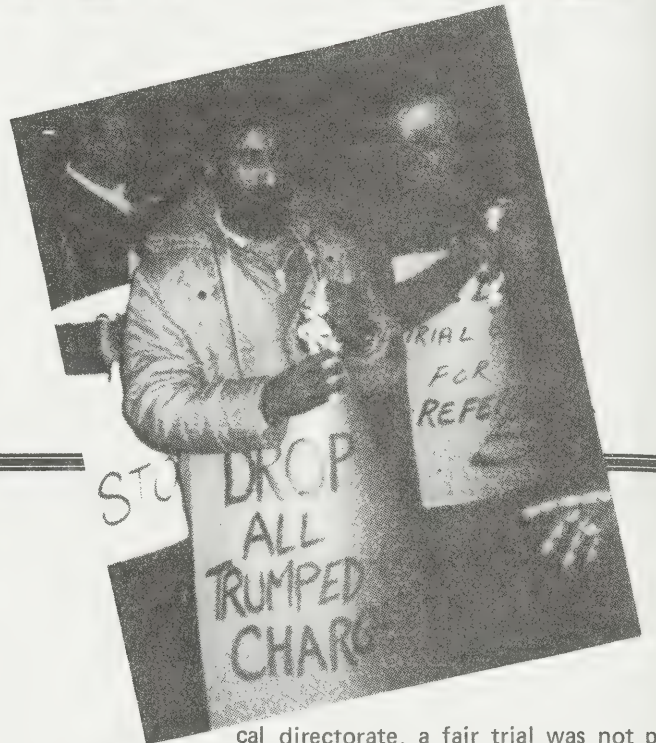
Not, simply a power to defend those rights under threat, but, a force for the unlimited expansion of what we previously won.

Not simply the right to work but an inalienable right to a wage; not simply a call for the dispatching of the SPG but a challenge on the whole system of policing, not simply a defensive legal action against racist employment practices, but an entire political solution to colonial working conditions.

And this struggle is not confined to the shores of Britain. From Tehran to Bangladesh, from Moscow to Brixton, from Grenada to Southall, the question is posed: The destruction of the existing world order and the emergence of free workers and peasants in free association throughout the world.

Race Today Collective
January 1980.

GUYANA: 'The



1979 saw the turning point in Guyana's political life. It witnessed the formation of the Working Peoples Alliance (WPA) as an opposition party pledged to remove Burnham's 15 year old corrupt People's National Congress regime from power. Its entry into the public arena of Guyana's political quagmire, threatens to break the stranglehold that the PNC — the ruling African Party and the Peoples Progressive Party — the Indian Party led by Cheddi Jagan — has held in the post-colonial era.

Burnham has counter-attacked in an effort to shore up his crumbling credibility and to discredit the ever increasing popularity of the WPA. He has declared in 'The Chronicle', that he will meet 'steel with steel', referring to his intention to crush the WPA which he has contemptuously re-christened the 'Worst Possible Alternative'. Public rallies called by the WPA have been violently broken up by Burnham's thugs. A strike by bauxite workers for a merit increase which threatened to develop into a general strike was defeated, sugar workers and store workers among others who supported the bauxite workers were harassed back to work. Other workers who have expressed sympathy with and support for the WPA have experienced unprecedented harassment, physical intimidation and arrests on spurious grounds.

So intense has been the terror meted out to WPA activists that in late September, it was forced to go underground.

The pattern of attack on WPA rallies is repeated with monotonous regularity. First, police refused permission for the use of a public hailer. Secondly, thugs were mobilised, in a mufti, to disrupt the rallies and single out WPA activists for beatings. In one such confrontation at Vreedenhooop, the WPA had its equipment smashed. Then at Campbellville Moses Bhagwan, a leading lawyer of the Referendum 5, was beaten and his arms broken by police who charged the rally being addressed by Walter Rodney.

The cases of Walter Rodney, Rupert Roopnarine and Omowale, three of the Referendum 5, all charged with arson of the PNC headquarters and the Ministry of National Development in July, 1979, will be heard on January 21, 1980.

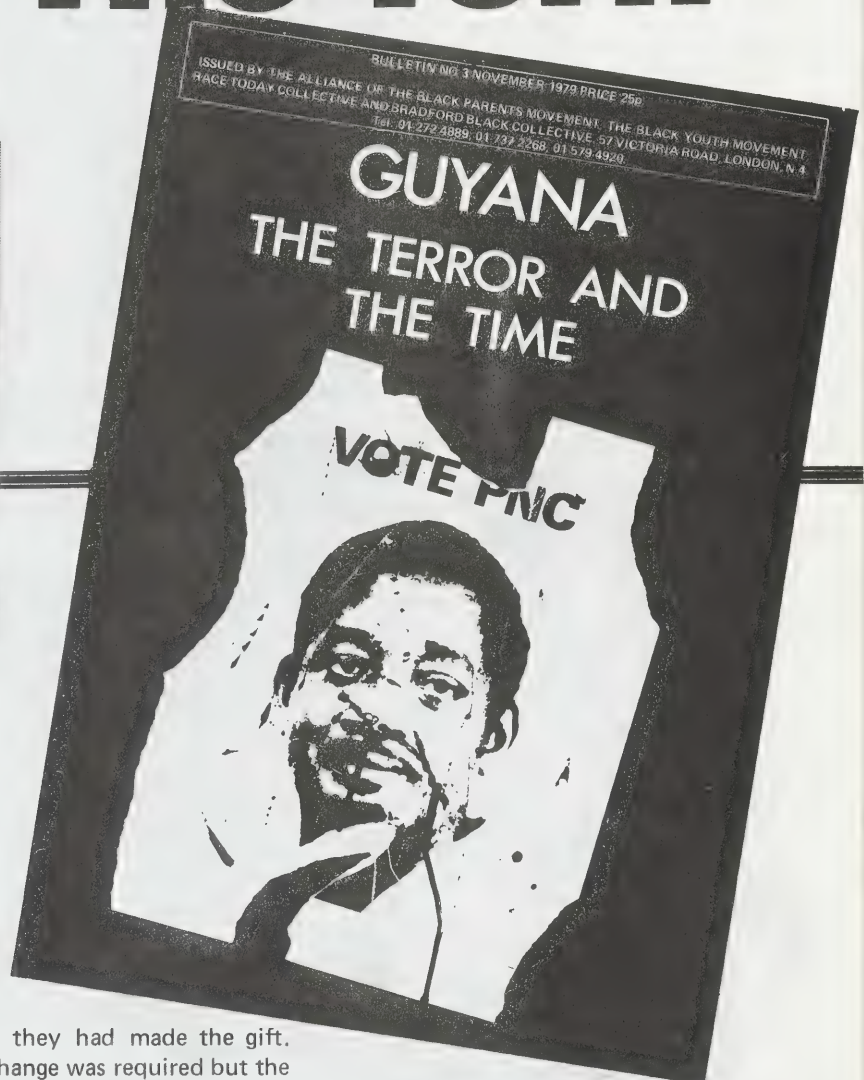
These cases will be heard in a magistrates court. The defendants were denied the right of trial by jury after Magistrate Fung Kee Fung granted the prosecution's application for a summary trial in a magistrate's court. The defence team has been joined by three international lawyers, Richard Small (Jamaica), Bobby Clarke (Barbados) and Holmes (USA). Small pointed to the fact in court, that because magistrates were instructed by the politi-

cal directorate, a fair trial was not possible. The atmosphere of the hearing, held in October, was tense and charged with violence. People were searched on entering the court. Outside the court a demonstration was broken up by police who arrested 14 people and charged them with unlawful assembly. Their bail restriction required them to report to the police daily.

The suppression of opposition news and information is also a feature of the present reign. The 'Mirror', paper of the PPP was silenced for 10 days at the height of the mass opposition to the PNC. This was another stage of the stranglehold that the PNC has attempted to exercise over all printing materials. The 'Mirror' could not obtain newsprint. The 'Mirror' is published by the New Guyana Company Limited. In 1971 it ordered a new printing press from the United States. Readers familiar with the 'Mirror' will know that the quality of its print is antiquated. Two acts passed by the PNC in 1971 and 1972 required, for the first time, import licences for printing material and newsprint from any country. Initially the New Guyana Company were granted a licence to obtain the printing press but when this expired they were refused another.

In Guyana, the government owned company, the Guyana National Newspapers Ltd., controls 13 publications,

Year Of The Turn'



the 'Mirror' company controls four. The only other publication is the 'Catholic Standard', which the government refused to print after their opposition to the rigged 1978 referendum. For several years from 1971 — 1979 the 'Mirror' has tried by all methods to obtain the right to freely obtain newsprint. They have contested it in court, won the first round and lost the second. During this period they have not been able to publish on several occasions.

Since December 1977 the government has flatly refused the New Guyana Company Ltd. all rights to import newsprint. The Company has been forced to purchase on a week to week basis from the state-owned Guyana National Newspapers Ltd. This means they have to purchase, at whatever price and at whatever quantity is dictated by the GNNL. Since August 9, 1979, the government has refused to sell newsprint to the New Guyana Company on the grounds that fresh shipments of newsprint have been delayed, despite photographic evidence, of large stocks in the government warehouse in Georgetown.

When the 'Mirror' failed to appear, the Caribbean Publishing and Broadcasting Association, based in Barbados, donated five tons of newsprint in order that the 'Mirror' could be published. They stated that while they did not agree with the PPP's policies, in the interests of

press freedom, they had made the gift. No foreign exchange was required but the government refused to give permission to the New Guyana Company to obtain the newsprint.

Burnham's efforts to silence the voices of opposition has not yet sunk to the censoring of letters or telephone calls all of which confirm the fervour for change in Guyana.

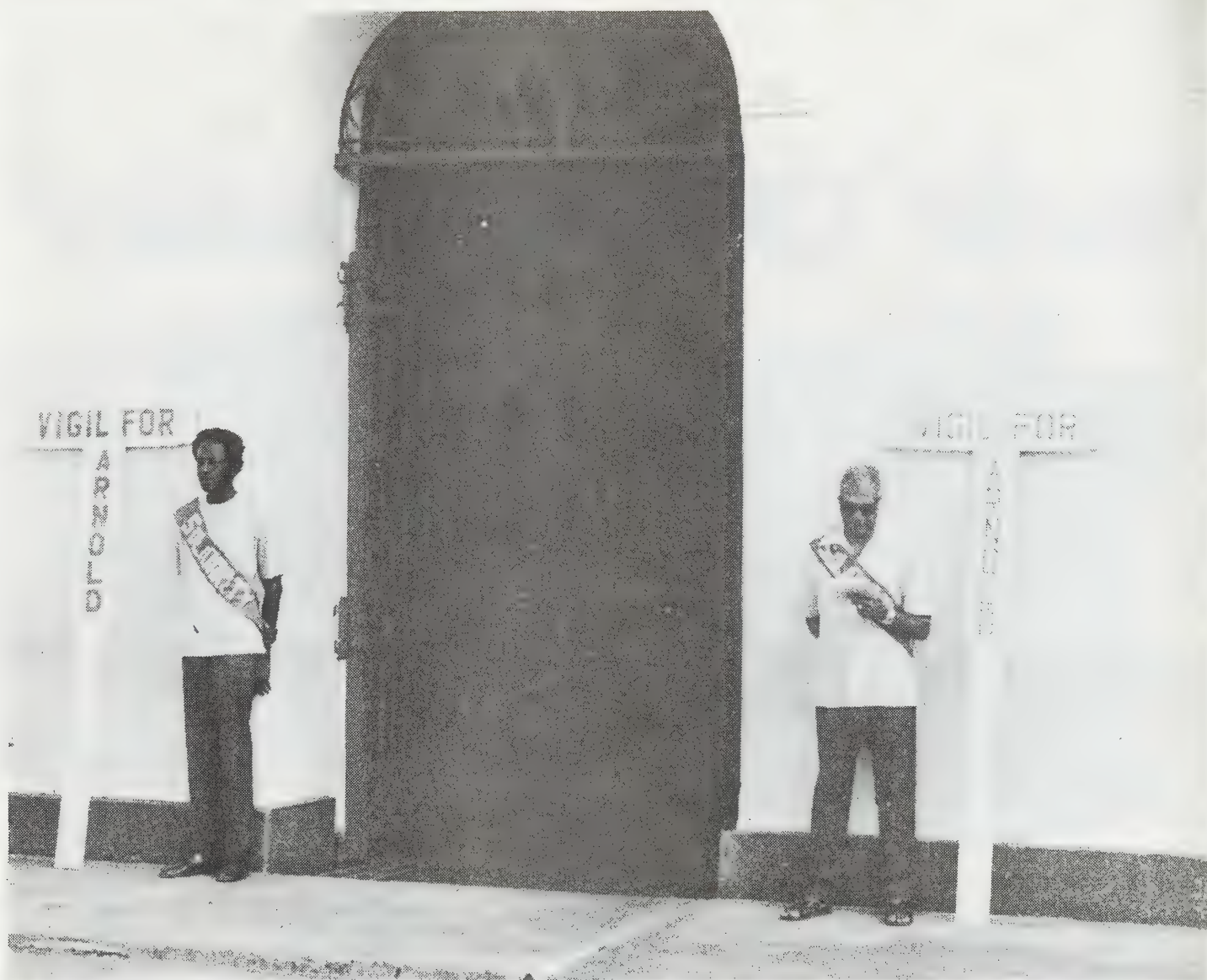
International committees have been formed in Britain, Holland, Trinidad, Jamaica, Canada and the United States. They have been active in mobilising the Caribbean populations in these countries against PNC and in support of the WPA. The PNC have sent representatives, particularly to the United States and Britain to mobilise support for the regime. Their speeches have followed the same pattern of informing their audiences of the minute details of their economic programmes, present and future. To hear them one would never believe that the country was facing serious political up-

heavals.

Here in Britain a Committee Against Repression in Guyana (CARIG), has been active in providing the population with information about events in Guyana. They have held pickets and public meetings and their campaign has taken firm root amongst Guyanese in Britain. During September and October two public meetings have been called by CARIG. These have not only highlighted the current events in Guyana but discussed the politics of Guyana and its relationship to the region as a whole.

Pickets were held in support of the Referendum 5 and others who appeared in court during these months. On November 12, a candlelight vigil was held in memory of the murdered comrade Ohene Kowama, at the Guyanese High Commission, London.

In August a Committee Against Re-



pression in Guyana (CARIG) was formed in Trinidad by the Oilfield Workers Trade Union. They organised a series of Teach-Ins to be held on October 17 - 19 and addressed by Walter Rodney and Rupert Roopnarine. However Dr. Rodney was re-

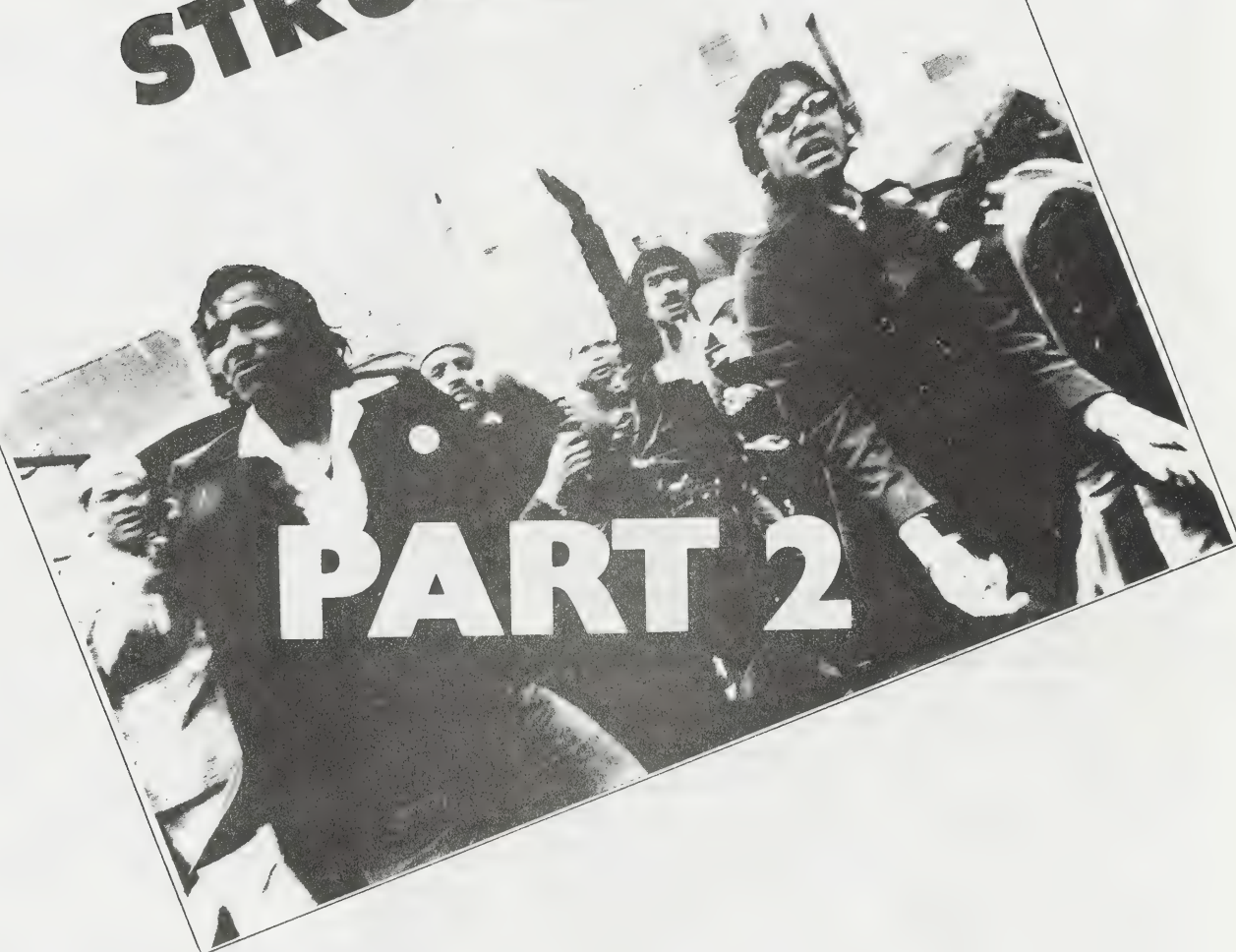
fused permission to leave Guyana by the Guyanese government, despite an undertaking by him to return for his case hearing on October 23. No reason was given for this refusal and CARIG (Trinidad) had received permission from the Min-

istry of National Security in Trinidad and Tobago for Dr. Rodney to come and deliver the lectures. CARIG (Trinidad) stated that this was an isolated case and cited the case of Clive Thomas, also a leading member of the WPA, whose passport was seized by Immigration officials.

Recently, a CARIG has been formed by left forces in Jamaica.

Several committees have been formed within the US. In Los Angeles on September 22 Kit Nasciemento, Minister of State in the Office of Prime Minister, Forbes Burnham, was greeted by about fifty picketers protesting against human rights violations and political repression in Guyana. The demonstration was organised by the Guyana Nationals and Friends Alliance which had held educational programmes on the developing crisis in Guyana. As Burnham resorts to greater despotic measures to remain in power, the question is, will 1980 end his 15 year old oppressive rule as the 'Maximum' leader and self-styled Kabaka of Guyana? 1979 has shown that the writing is on the wall and workers and peasants power is the only possible alternative.

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE ASIAN STRUGGLE



PART 2

In this the second part of a two part article, we trace the organisational forms thrown up by Asian workers' struggle in this country. We note the growth of an Asian youth movement which rejects the traditions of Asian organisations and identify the political tasks faced by Asian youths.

If young Catholics had not joined the Irish Republican Army in the sixties and the seventies, the British State would have been able to smash the Republican movement. It wouldn't have taken them long to

round up the old guard. A political movement runs on new blood. The Indian Workers' Association in Britain is one movement which has been unable to win such a transfusion. As a political and industrial

force, it came to a peak in the mid and late sixties. In the seventies, it inevitably began to degenerate into the position of mediator, into the posture of a support force and into downright conservative, leadership-seeking reaction.

There was no predicting this inevitability. The IWA had its origins in the social and cultural cohesiveness of the Punjabi community. Way back in the late fifties and early sixties, when most of the immigration to Southall and to Leicester and Derby and the industrial centres of the Midlands was from the Jullunder and Hoshiarpur districts of Punjab, there was hardly any need to come to any organisational conclusions about what Gujaratis, African Asians, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, would find in organisation. There was hardly any need to apply foresight to fielding an independent Asian struggle in Britain. The early industrial immigrant workers in the Midlands and the mill belt of Yorkshire and Lancashire established themselves in the factories and the communities where they worked before 'immigration' became a political issue requiring the force and organisation of black workers as a whole.

Starting as a cultural and social meeting place for immigrant workers, as a focus of nostalgia and national pride, the Indian Workers' Association rapidly became politicised as a consequence of the industrial struggles the members faced and, in the late sixties, in response to the immigration laws passed by the Labour government.

In the mid-sixties in Southall and in Birmingham, the Indian Workers' Association was the only resort that Asian workers had when faced with the necessities of publicising an injustice, pushing a demand or trying to win public support and political leverage for an industrial action. The leadership of the Indian Workers' Association came from the workers who had been members of a political party in India. Some were members of the Akali Dal, some were members of the Congress, the most significant had been members of the Communist Party of India. It was these members who gave the organisation some constitutional shape and the vision of continuous contact with political developments in India. They brought to the organisation the discipline of having a constitution, elections, official posts and responsibilities and a fee-paying membership.

Contact with Indian politics was continuous. The IWA followed the fortunes of Indian political parties through discussions, resolutions, invitations to visiting politicians and protests at India House. The Communist Party of India gathered funds from the expatriate workers who may not have been members of the CPI, but who contributed sums for their campaigns at the behest of leaders of the IWA. When the communist movement in India split, the Indian Workers' Association was also visited by schism. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) emerged in 1964 as a mass faction of the CPI and joined coalition governments in two



states and defeated CPI candidates in several others. Again in '67, when the Maxalbari movement in India carried forward the further split in the CPI(M), giving rise to the CPI (Marxist Leninists), the Indian Workers' Association gave birth to an 'ML' branch.

The CPI branch, fairly influential in Southall, kept in touch with the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) through some leaders who were members of both organisations. As a consequence it endorsed the Labour parliamentary candidacy of Sidney Bidwell, because the CP in Britain threw its support behind Labour. The CPI(M) branch emerged as the one which lent most support to the independent struggles of Asian workers on the industrial front. Its stronghold was Birmingham, and the foundry workers of the Midlands were proving to be a more recalcitrant labour force than their employers had imagined. Several strikes broke out in Birmingham amongst Asian workers and the IWA (ML) was called upon in several cases to provide the know-how to carry on the industrial fight.

The IWA (ML) was led by the late Jagmohan Joshi. This branch of the IWA had to balance three factors influencing its directions and its membership. The leaders of this faction, joined by young Indian intellectuals of the CPI(ML) persuasion, studying at the LSE or some other British college, set themselves the task of propagandising the China-learning policies, 'the violent revolution' policies of the early ML groups in India. In Britain, they had to take into account the facts of the material struggle of the members on the shop-floor of foundries and mills and factories, one of which was that Asian workers were disciplined in their response to shop-floor issues by the precise conditions of the work itself and not by a 'Maoist' ideology. The IWA(ML) also incorporated, out of courage, vision and necessity, the emerging 'black power' ideology that was generating militant revolutionary organisation amongst young West Indians.

For some of the activists of the IWA, this last ingredient was a bit difficult to swallow. Their leadership seemed to champion it. There were connections, tenuous and wary, between the IWA and the Black Panther Movement, the Black Unity and Freedom Party and other groups that identified themselves as part of a black dawn in Britain. When the Black Panther Movement took the initiative in 1971 of calling a National Conference On The Rights Of Black People, and booked the Alexandra Palace in which to do it. The IWA sent a grudging delegation. The twenty or so people who turned up in a coach from Birming-

ham had obviously discussed the potential of the conference before they came. They didn't want to be participants; they wanted to be observers. The conference was to last two days. After the first half of the first day, the IWA walked out. "What is the ideology, what is the line? We don't understand. Anybody **seems** to be getting up to say anything."

They went back to Birmingham feeling that the black power movement could talk endlessly about the rights of black people; they were an Asian organisation willing to make common cause with West Indians under the political label 'black', but there was no far-reaching analysis of imperialism, no ideological denunciation of Russia. They couldn't join. They had behind them the confidence of having organised a conference of militants from the factories of the Midlands which had been on strike in the previous two years.

They never made common cause with the West Indian organisations again, except when the delegations of both populations met on the anti-immigration statute demonstrations called in London in '68 and '70, when coaches came down from Birmingham and contingents set out from Brixton and Notting Hill to denounce Callaghan, then Home Secretary in the Wilson Government, as a racist. The demonstration against the Kenyan Asian Bill, passed by the Labour government in record time (between conception as a Bill and execution as an act, it went through the shortest gestation in British history) was the most massive.

In Leicester, four thousand people marched against Callaghan's Bill. The IWA, predominantly the CPI(M) wing, had mobilised the Asian working community and the student and organised left-wing sections of white society. In London, the demonstration was fifteen thousand strong. There were West Indians and Asians and whites. The whites were organised behind the banners of the Communist Party, the International Socialists and the handful of trade union officials who were influenced by their membership of political parties. The West Indians, in a minority, followed by the banners of black power groups. The Asians, in the largest community groupings, from Birmingham, Southall, Leamington Spa, Derby, Coventry and Leicester, followed the banners of the IWA.

AFRICAN ASIANS

In all its history, the Indian Workers' Association never emerged as the prime moving force in any industrial struggle. In the sixties, workers in factories turned to it for organisation. In the seventies, with the settlement of the African Asians, on whose behalf the IWA had demonstrated and agitated, a new force emerged. The IWA gave it meagre verbal and

financial support and, in one or two significant cases, blundered into opposing the impatience and independence of this new battalion on the Asian industrial front.

The new Asians came from Africa. A lot of sociological claptrap had been written about them and their forced migration from Kenya in '68 and the later migration of thousands from Amin's Uganda.

A minority of these migrants came to Britain and attempted to enter a profession or use some accumulated or borrowed capital to set up a shop or a small business. The majority of them went into the labouring that Asians before them had done. The single significant fact about the Asians from Africa that this article is concerned with is that it was a majority of African Asians who brought about and carried through the industrial struggles of Mansfield Hosiery Mills in Loughborough in '73, the Imperial Typewriters strike in Leicester in '74 and the Grunwick struggle in Willesden in '77.

For African Asians the discipline of factory shift work was new. Large numbers of women, who had never done a day's paid labour outside the home, were forced by the exigencies of family economy or sheer individual survival to seek employment in factories. The supervisory structures of the factories, into which they went, were unacceptable to them. The women at Imperial Typewriters repeatedly told reporters during the strike that what they objected to was the white male supervisors regulating the time that they spent in the toilets. "We won't be treated like slaves."

In all the industrial disputes of the sixties and seventies, this clash between the management and supervisors and the basic expectation of decency from the work-force, played a part. The African Asians continued to be employed in those areas of industry which white workers had abandoned. In a report on the West Midlands written by Denis Brooks for the Runnymede Trust, he generalises about his research findings:

"Primarily black workers are found in numbers in those establishments where sufficient white workers could not be recruited and retained. Whether managers in these establishments were 'liberal' or 'prejudiced' towards black workers was almost completely irrelevant; they needed to recruit, black workers were available."

While this may be so, the pattern of disputes suggest that the treatment of the Asian labour force by the supervisory staff is not an irrelevant factor. In Mansfield Hosiery Mills in Loughborough, where the dispute was about promotions to grades reserved for white workers, the management's desire to keep Asian labour in semi-skilled work played a part. The Grunwick strike was triggered by the walkout of a few young Asians after an argument with a supervisor.

The Asian industrial struggles of the seventies were

a mass rejection of unskilled and semi-skilled work, the hours of employment, the structural racism which prevented promotion out of the badly-paid sectors of the economy. The foundry workers of the Midlands were working in the sixties for as little as £14 a week. In 1968, at the Midland Motor Cylinder Company, Asian workers protested against the promotion of a white worker above their heads in their work section. The workers struck until the promotion was withdrawn.

At Mansfield Hosiery Mills, the promotion issue was central. The Asian workforce operated in the semi-mechanised part of the factory and white workers were recruited to the mechanised side, given 'skilled' status and better pay and hours. The Mansfield Strike became a national issue because the workforce was divided on racial lines by the grading inherent in the management's production plan. The strikers had to fight the combined force of the management and the National Union of Hosiery Workers whose officials declared themselves against the strike and made several racist remarks which the newspapers picked up.

Imperial Typewriters followed in 1974. The divide between the organised white labour movement and the organised independent struggle of an Asian workforce became a historical fact, one from which there was no return. The strike lasted three months. From the beginning the Asian workforce was jealous of its independence. What was the strike about? It was an organised assault on the colonial relations that characterised the employment of Asians in Britain. The workers who walked out of the factory on Mayday 1974 complained about the low pay, the fiddling of bonuses, the constant harassment of the workforce for more productivity, the imbalance in the production targets given to blacks and whites, the non-existence of Asian shop stewards, the restrictions that made up their daily working lives as compared to those of the white workers — washing time, tea breaks, lunch breaks, toilet breaks, dignity.

The Transport and General Workers Union, to which the strikers belonged, professed not to understand the strike. George Bromley, negotiator of the TGWU for thirty years, a Justice of the Peace and a stalwart of the Labour Party said: "The workers have not followed the proper disputes procedure. They have no legitimate grievances and it's difficult to know what they want. I think there are racial tensions, but they are not between the whites and the coloureds. The tensions are between those Asians from the sub-continent and those from Africa."

Bromley's remarks throughout the strike were unfortunate. The above-quoted remark was not prompted by his observation of the strike-force itself which contained Asians from the sub-continent as well as those from Africa. It was prompted by the attitude of the Indian Workers' Association (ML) to the Imperial Typewriter's strike. At the first sign of

unrest, the Transport and General Workers Union officials went running to the IWA. By 1974, the IWA in Leicester had permanent officials who put themselves up for elections each year, and continued in office year after year building their contacts with union officials, Labour party worthies and the network of mediators and negotiators, which ensured that capitalist production is not brought to its knees by workers acting in the interests of their class.



The Imperial strikers sought the assistance of Benny Bunsu, a South African by nationality and a political activist, who had played an advisory part in the Mansfield Hosiery strike in Loughborough, not so many miles away. At first, the Indian Worker's Association was wary of the strike. "They are mostly Gujaratis," was a remark often heard amongst the veterans of the Punjabi leadership. "They have a shop-keeper mentality, what's the point of helping them? They'll take the money and set up shops to sell us expensive goods". When the strike hit the national newspapers, a gang from the Indian Worker's Association turned up at the strike headquarters. They were told what they could do to assist the strike. There were several factories in Leicester and throughout the Midlands over whose workforce the IWA had some influence. The IWA didn't want to know. They wanted to know how they could achieve prominence by running the strike, not what they could do to assist it. A crowd of IWA activists threatened to beat up Benny Bunsu. It was a sort of desperation. An organisation that had achieved mediating status had pitted itself against the emergent independent force of Asian workers.

The mediators lost. Without the help of the IWA, the strike came to an end with a negotiated return to work. After the event, IWA activists said that one faction was giving the other a bad name, but the truth remains that the Indian Worker's Association, enmeshed as it is now with the Community Relations Councils and their sporadic programmes on education, equality and the like, caught up

as it is with delivering support for the Labour Party, compromised as it is through personal contact with labour-movement-wallahs, can never reinstate itself as a force for the independent material struggle of Asian workers.

YOUNG ASIANS

No wonder then that the young have deserted the ranks. A parallel development shaped itself in the Bangladeshi community of Britain. Its distinction in the late sixties and seventies was that it never had an industrial base. The Bangladeshis of London, concentrated in the East End and in Camden, work largely in the tiny establishments of the rag-trade or in restaurants run by Asians. Their position in production has not given rise to industrial struggle for wages and reduced working hours in the same way that it has in the communities of Southall, the Midlands or the North Western industrial belt of London



Yet the Bangladeshis have, since the mid-seventies, moved politically as a community. The East End of London has seen the unique battle in black communities over housing. It has generated political organisations fighting racist attacks in which the community relations buffs and the stultifying leadership of the older generation, full of caution and reliance on powerful contacts, is wholly absent or wholly defeated.

In no other black community in Britain has there been a mass movement to combat the fact of homelessness. Between 1972 and 1976, the Bangladeshi community of the East End began a mass squatting movement, a determination to appropriate vacant homes and fight the effects of the unsettling migration to one of the worst areas of Britain. The squatting movement was a pre-condition of the organised demands made on the state's housing authorities by the Bengali Housing Action Group (BHAG) which surfaced in 1975, with demonstrations and political agitation.

In 1976, one phase of Asian political activity in



Britain was supplanted by another. The young Asians, who were born or brought up in Britain, made a decisive intervention. They were a generation which had displayed scant interest in Indian politics. They were not the people to summon rallies against Indira Gandhi's emergency, or turn up in their thousands to picket India House. Their sense of loyalty to the Asian community was only partly a product of cultural upbringing. It owed much to the political isolation of Asians in Britain who hadn't known Asia. In 1976, the isolation turned into identity. In Southall and in the East End of London, in the north in Manchester and in Blackburn, Asian youth organisations stepped forward to declare themselves defenders of their communities. The step was taken in direct response to a spate of assaults on and killings of Asians.

The central task of the various youth organisations that arose in Southall and in the East End was self-defence. From the beginning, these organisations adopted an antagonistic stance to the direction and guidance of the Indian Workers' Association, the Bangladesh Welfare Association and those formations which belonged to another generation and clearly did not want to shoulder the burden of community self defence. The youth organisations were and still are subject to the uncertainties and pressures that accompany a political dawn.

First and foremost there is the need to transform sporadic enthusiasm into regular cadre work. Several of the youth organisations haven't the experience that will provide cadres with regular political work and political education. The inexperience opens them to the influence of example from tradition, to the influence of the white left groups with their regular band of activists and anti-racist formulae and slogans and strategy, to the lure of community relations negotiating activity. All these factors and influences tend to diffuse the clarity and strength of the Asian youth movement and add to its inevitable growing



pains.

Take the East End as an example: the four or five youth groups that have existed since the hectic summer of 1976 have all been approached by older Bangladeshi politicians to espouse the political line of the various Bangladeshi parties. The youth movements have been invited to swell the ranks of meetings in favour of the Bangladeshi ruling party, and the leaders have been promised some kind of prominence in Bangladesh as important politicians in the Bangladeshi community of Britain.

Apart from the interest of the national parties, the Community Relations Officers of the East End police stations have cultivated the acquaintance and friendship of youth who appear to be leaders and have cajoled and coerced them into negotiating meetings about 'community relations'. Besides keeping the police informed of developments in the organisation of the East End community, it compromises the 'leaders' in the eyes of the rest of the community.

The talent scouts of all the leftish parties of Britain have also moved in, from the Labour Party which organises dances to introduce young Asian voters to Ian Mikardo and Peter Shore, to the Anti-Nazi campaigners who want to carry a radical element of Asian youth into the labour movement's organisations and into the unions.

Having started as movements to defend their own communities, the Asian youth groups had a perspective chalked out for them by history. Here was a community under direct physical attack. There was a generation of young people who were determined to say that this was not on, that they would throw their time and energy to seeing that it didn't happen. The task of self-defence of the community is a daunting one. It means generating a disciplined para-military movement, or it means activating the entire community into a militant, insurrectionary community, willing to move on every issue that touches them materially. The youth movement had neither the experience

nor the historical hindsight to generate that sort of organisation instantly.

The euphoria of the self-defence movement has produced neither the disciplined para-military organisations that can in fact systematically undertake self-defence, nor has it produced the organisation which can agitationally undertake campaigns on material rights. And yet the history of the black movement in Britain points simply to that.

What the Asian youth have established are hundreds of organisations, from musical groups to cultural and sports clubs. They have fought for the social space they occupy. The existence of these cultural irreversibles gives a geographical location and particularly to the life that the young Asians are making in this country.

AND TO SOUTHALL

The youth movement of Asians is only three years old. Today, it faces the most serious challenge in its history. The British state's reaction to the Southall demonstration of April 25 this year, and the trials which arise out of the arrests at that demonstration, are severe tests of the political stamina of the movement.

In the run up to the general election this year, the National Front was given permission by Ealing councillors to hold an 'election meeting' in the old town hall at Southall. There were protests from the Indian Workers' Association. Several MPs voiced their misgivings about the wisdom of the move. The councillors of Southall were in touch with Merlyn Rees' Home Office and with the government's legal department. The mood of the Asian community was explosive. The Home Office knew that the meeting would meet with the combined resistance of the old and young Asians of Southall. The National Front was not called off. The state evidently decided that it was willing to face the challenge, and demonstrate to the Asian movement that there could be no question of its getting its way on the streets of their own community.

Several thousand policemen were deployed in and around Southall. The Southall Youth Movement took to the streets earlier than the main force of the counter-demonstrators, composed of the Indian Workers' Association and a few hundred members of the Anti-Nazi League. The National Front coach, carrying its fifty-nine decoys, was driven in. Over a thousand Southall residents, present on the streets that day, were clobbered by police batons. The Special Patrol Group was unleashed and managed to kill Blair Peach, a teacher who was in Southall as a supporter of the Anti-Nazi League. Seven

hundred people, very many of them Asians, were arrested. Three hundred and forty-two were charged. The police cleared the streets in military charges. When demonstrators took refuge from the assaults in the offices of Southall Rights, they were pursued by snatch squads of policemen.

The charges against those arrested range from using abusive language to malicious wounding and causing actual bodily harm to policemen. At the end of the day, the police held the streets, but at tremendous cost and with an unprecedented riot-control effort that brought to mind the assault on the Notting Hill Carnival of 1976.

The cases of the 342 have been assigned to Barnet Magistrates Court, infamous for its role in disposing of the Grunwick defendants. The special court was put in the hands of five stipendiary magistrates, Messrs Cook, Badge, Canham, Burge and McDermott. At least two of these stipendiaries are seasoned police prosecuting lawyers. The decision to engage them to officiate at the trials is, to us, obviously not arbitrary. The trials began in June 1979 and will probably stretch to February.

At the time of writing, 186 of the cases have been heard so far. About half of these have been remanded and therefore the trials will be pursued at a later date. Of the other 91 cases that have actually been disposed of, 77 defendants have been found guilty and fourteen people have been acquitted. Four defendants have been sent to jail. The most extraordinary occurrence was the sentencing of two witnesses. Mr B. Rampal and Mr J. Samara by magistrate Canham. After they had testified from the witness box, he pronounced that they were, as far as he was concerned, part of a crowd 'hostile' to the police and would have to be bound over, as convicted defendants are, to keep the peace with convictions and fines hanging over them. Canham went so far as to wonder why these witnesses had not been arrested and charged.

Several defence committees have been set up in Southall to provide the legal and political support that the cases demand. The committees don't appear to be able to agree amongst themselves on the line to take in a losing fight. Through these committees, the maximum that the vibrant youth movement, which faced the police on the streets in April, has been able to surface is a stunned mechanical efficiency, not a sufficient political and agitational answer to the state's assault on the movement.

The assault of police and courts, with permission and co-ordination from first the Labour and now the Tory government, is reminiscent of the attack on the movement of West Indian youth in the late sixties and early seventies. The predominantly West Indian groups, which are loosely referred to as the 'black power movement' were, throughout the early seventies besieged by court cases and the necessity to form defence committees



Photo credit: Julian Stapleton

to fight them. There wasn't for instance, a week in which a member of the Black Panther Movement didn't face some charge in court. From the Mangrove Case to the trial of Cliff McDaniel of the Black Youth Movement, runs a thread of blunder and experience which the West Indian movement has had to weave into the fabric of its existence. The Asian movement is today being similarly tried.

The West Indian movement gives the Asian term of trial some pointers. The Southall/Barnet organisation cannot simply concentrate on fixing transport for defendants to travel the twenty miles from home to court. The court defences must follow principles controlled by the political committee of defendants which must pronounce and internationally propagandise the defence that the black movement is capable of fielding around the cases.

In our two part article, 'New Perspectives on the Asian Struggle', we have tried to show, particularly to young Asian activists, that an Asian movement has existed since the late fifties. The movement has a history of its own and did not come alive when discovered by the Anti-Nazi League or young Asian activists.

We have identified the emergence of the IWAs as an organisational expression of that movement and traced how they have turned into their opposites — a hindrance to the further radical and revolutionary development of the independent struggle of Asian workers.

The present stage of the movement could be described as a radical and insurrectionary movement of Asian youth, now faced with the merciless counter-attack by the British state, its police and courts. In this period, the Asian youth movement faces the task of consolidating itself and winning older workers from the stranglehold of the different Indian Workers' Associations and Bangladeshi Associations. It is an enormous task, but one which West Indian workers, who have shed the burden of the West Indian Standing Conference, will instinctively understand and assist in resolving.

BACKLASH

FREE DESSIE WOODS

Atlanta, Georgia — in the late October a call-in campaign to the Georgia Women's Institute of Correction (GWIC). U.S. President James Earl Carter and Governor Busbee's office was bombarded with phone calls to demand: 1. The unconditional Freedom of Dessie Woods, 2. An immediate end to the forced druggings and beatings, 3. That she be released from Segregation (the hole) and put back into general population.

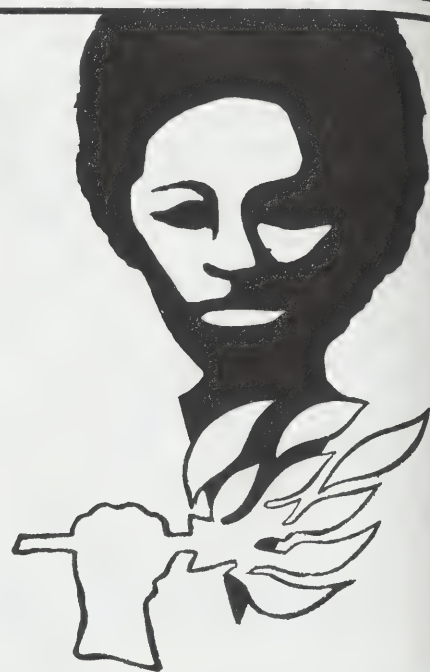
A Dessie Woods supporter was informed by Georgia Governor Busbee's aid that Dessie Woods was dead. The supporter immediately contacted the National Committee to Defend Dessie Woods, who began looking into the statement. After calling directly to GWIC and speaking with Lieutenant Renfroe, we were told that Dessie was not dead, although we were not allowed to speak with her.

As of this date it is not absolutely certain whether Dessie Woods is dead or alive, although we question the tactic used by the governor's office since no one at this office will verify the statement or

reveal any information as to who said it. Damesha Blackearth chairwoman of the National Committee to Defend Dessie Woods (NCDDW) stated that, "we see the statement as a clear indication of the attitude that the governor's office has for Dessie Woods in particular and black people in general.

"Dessie Woods is a 34 year old black mother of two children who is presently serving a 22 year prison sentence, for successfully defending herself from an armed white would be rapist named Ronnie Horne. When Horne attempted to rape Dessie at gun point, Dessie made the snap decision to fight for her very life. Woods took the gun from Horne and shot and killed him with his own unlicensed gun."

Blackearth went on to say that, "ever since Woods imprisonment there has been a massive campaign to free her. Just prior to the call-in the NCDDW, launched a month long European Tour to build international support for Dessie Woods. Up to date militant anti-colonial Free Dessie Woods Committees exist in Copenhagen,



Denmark, and Amsterdam, Holland as well as on-going support in London, England, Paris, France and Hamburg, Germany."

As a part of the NCDDW efforts to intensify our campaigns the Chairwoman, will be making a national tour at which time pickets, call-ins and press conferences will be held throughout the US to demand the unconditional Freedom of Dessie and to discuss the impact of the European Tour.

In the last communications with Dessie, she stated "Uhuru my beloved comrade sisters, and brothers, I hope this message finds you in the very best of health. I am writing to let you know that I am in seg. because prison officials here put two North American (white) women up to fight me. I was forced to defend myself. So they locked me in seg. these people did not put the white women in seg. nor did they write them up for fighting me. The warden said he is going to take me to a real court outside of this prison. These people have been fighting me a long time. I have told you on the phone I could not take anymore of the hell so I had to fight back. This isolation and segregation is full of black sisters for fighting with white women and the white women remain in population. It is not but one way out of this and that is to fight like hell."

Those words are certainly not words of a defeated sister. Let it be known that if something has happened to our comrade sister, it will not go unnoticed. As Dessie vowed to "Fight like Hell" so will the NCDDW.



WHITHER TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO?



In the last ten years, the working class in the island state of Trinidad and Tobago has been involved in two major insurrections against the government of that state: In 1970, so complete was the insurrection that the government only survived by the most slender thread. Then, in 1974, a general strike, by oil and sugar workers, met with the most violent reaction from the forces of law and order. Against this background, C.L.R. James outlines his views on the present period.

What are some of the more significant things going on in Trinidad and Tobago today? . . .

To me, the most significant thing happening in Trinidad at the present time is something that I noticed last summer when I spent three months here. As everybody knows, from the time I left Trinidad in 1963, I have been very critical of the PNM and the way that it was leading the country.

I never hesitated to make clear that ultimately I saw blood running down the streets of Port of Spain, San Fernando and Arima. And I used to say that because I knew Trinidad, and the whole of the Caribbean. I saw it going a certain way.

What astonished me last summer, and this time, is that I'm not telling that to anybody anymore. People

are meeting me and are anxious to tell me what they think. And I wouldn't use the phrase a "tinderbox". I do not know Trinidad well enough to call it a "tinderbox".

But the people in the territory are vastly disturbed about the lack of any conscious system by which they are to live, guide themselves, educate their children and expect from the Government a certain response to their needs. There is that feeling of not only an absence of anything to guide themselves by but a sort of despair, an emptiness that people feel.

I have found that feeling to be widespread. And that is a tremendous difficulty that any country has to carry, particularly an underdeveloped country.

You know, England is staggering on under a weight that would have killed most countries, but it is their

past and the strength of their tradition which they try to live by.

We have nothing. We have broken away from the British tradition but we have substituted nothing. So we are now a ship on a wide sea, blown hither and thither by every wind, and gradually being overcome by the sheer force of the problems which face any country today, particularly an underdeveloped country.

What would you say is the main cause of this sense of emptiness or of despair?

It is certainly a lack of political leadership, but I don't want to interpret political leadership purely in the sense of who you vote for. There is an absence of basic attitudes.

When the British were here, there was a basic attitude. The British had history, they had economic and political history, traditions. And when the worse came to the worse, you could always get some money from them. Now that was a way of life. You could oppose it. But there was something that you could oppose.

The problem of leadership at the present time is that the country has no standards, no perspective by which it must live, either in the distant future, say five to 10 years, or day-to-day.

There is nothing by which it can be governed or by which people could orient themselves. I am told that even at the level of the schools, there isn't that instinctive respect for teachers, something we used to have.

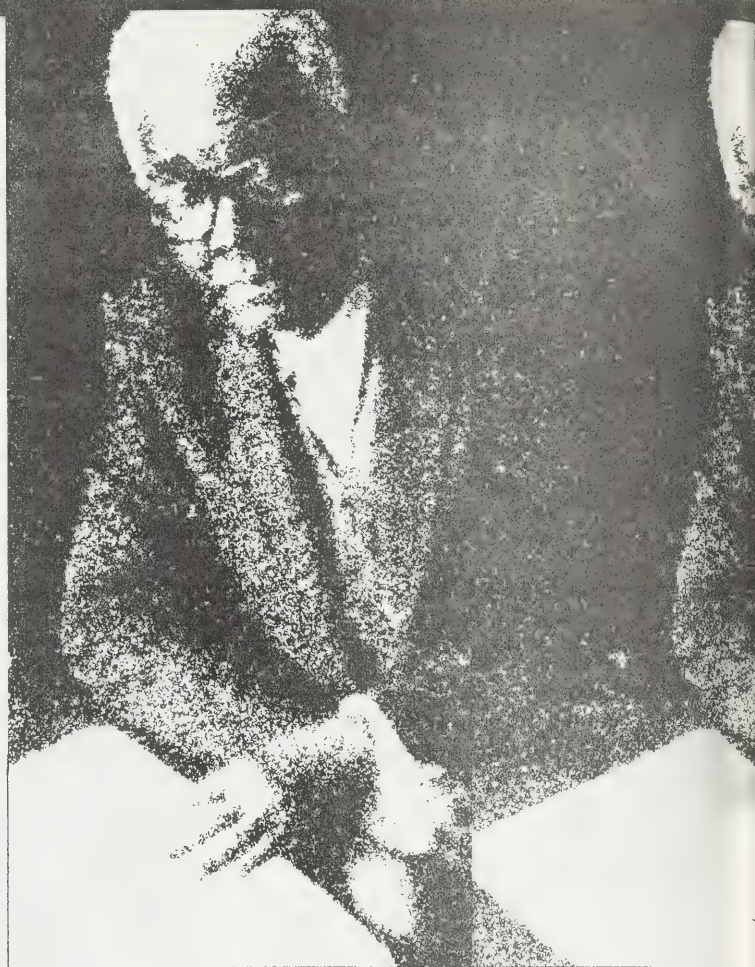
Coming out of the highly idealistic period of the nationalist movement in the 1950s, how did we get to where we are today? I mean, we began the march to independence with vigour and idealism. What do you think happened?

I would say that what happened here is merely an extreme case of what happened to some degree in most of the underdeveloped countries. We reached that high ideal within the struggle for independence, the struggle for freedom.

We used the very best that the country and modern civilisation had produced to help us in the struggle. I may mention that Williams promised in the PNM to give all sorts of things to the public in the best tradition of the new ideas of government in the world at that time. All of them, in fighting for independence, do that.

Then immediately the independence is gained, they face a dual problem. Firstly, they have been striking at the ideology, the ideas which have been dominant in the country for two or three centuries. They've done their best to break those up, and they propose that they are going to take all that is valuable out of those ideas and they are going to carry them through.

But they run up against two big obstacles. One is that the economy which they inherit is in a real mess.



The imperialists left behind a first-class mess. The second problem is, the imperialists used to govern a people who were, if not apathetic, at least not actively engaged in demands and requirements.

But the struggle for independence, and the methods which have been used, have resulted in the mass of the people in an underdeveloped country, particularly in Trinidad, being ready to demand that their immediate requirements be filled.

May I point out, when Williams came into power, he had brought this island to a pitch it had never reached before. The "doctor" had told the people he was going to change their lives.

Do you think Williams genuinely meant that or was it just the kind of political rhetoric that was considered necessary at the time?

At the time that he was struggling for the development of the country, Williams meant every word that he said. Now what happened, I can't say.

I'll tell you that to this day historians are not prepared to go into any analysis of the psychology of Robespierre and his different attitudes in the French Revolution. It is impossible to go into that. All you can say is that Robespierre was here, and then after a period he was way over on the other side.

All you can say about Williams is that he undoubtedly was thinking in terms of advancing the situation. But the fact remains that he has gone in the opposite direction and that is a fact.

I know Williams better than most people. I've known him since he was 12 years of age. I can't go



into the psychological aspects of it.

Well wouldn't it also be true that having made the kind of investment they did in 1956, people are also now doubtful and afraid of making any other kind of political investment for fear they will be so sorely disappointed again?

That has to be so. The fears and the doubts. You have to accept that. But may I point out to you those fears and doubts are inherent in any situation where the population feels not only the burden of what is going on, but the lack of any sense of perspective or direction. It has nothing to which it can be opposed. It's just wandering about.

And it is quite obvious that the population feels that. Mind you, I knew that sooner or later the PNM would have to face the fact that it was not taking the people anywhere that they wanted to go. But that it would reach the stage where the population would be saying "Well what are we doing? Where are we going?" That I didn't know. It is quite something.

And you know, I believe the reason for that is that previous to independence, we had nothing to go by. We were living according to the British tradition or the opposition to the British tradition. But there was no positive force.

And that was the cause of Williams' success, that for the first time somebody had come forward with positive proposals and a positive idea of movement. And now there's the shock that not only have we lost the old tradition but the new one has amounted to very little.

Okay, given all that, where do you see it leading to now? I mean, it's not the sort of situation that will remain static, is it?

No. It can't go on like that indefinitely. But what exactly is likely to happen, it is impossible for me to say. I have to be cautious about this because you know back in 1970 we were all expecting the upheaval to come in Jamaica, not here. But the question now is not when it will take place but the certainty that it will take place.

And the working class and those who are sympathetic to change have got to be ready for the question of power. People are wondering "who" and "what". I'm not wondering that at all. What happened in 1970? In 1975 you had a similar situation in Bloody Tuesday. In 1937, who knew Butler?

You see, people are expecting that some person will arise, will form a party and will attack the PNM and either substitute itself for it or weaken it in such a way that new politics will be made possible.

Unfortunately, politics does not always take that traditional route. I don't know what will happen and it would be wrong for me to try to speculate on the particular type of disruption which the system at present will experience. But that a tremendous disruption is going to take place, that I'm certain about.

Taking your point about the economic mess we inherited, don't you think that given the sudden influx of money from oil that this buys the government time, if only time to paper over the cracks?

I don't say no. But the fact remains that despite all that money, the situation is more acute today than it was three or four years ago. So the money has not solved the problem.

In many respects, I get the impression that the amount of money that is now available in the country and the disorder it has brought have made people more aware than before of the absence of any order and discipline and perspective by which the country is to live. I think the money has intensified that.

Now I want you to note something. There are other people who see that the PNM and Dr. Williams are on the way out. Number one is A.N.R. Robinson. He has left the PNM but why he has and what he left for, I don't know.

Another one is the former Attorney-General (Karl Hudson Phillips). He has split with Williams and now he says the country is a tinderbox.

To me, that is a very irresponsible statement to make. If the country is a tinderbox, it means at any time it will burst into flame. And if you know that, you must be able to say: "Well I have been an important member of the Government. I believe this and this is wrong and this is what must be done to recover from the situation that we are in." But where are we?

We have a break in the government. People no

longer have confidence in it. And people are opposed to it. But A.N.R. Robinson, Hudson Phillip, Lloyd Best, James Millette — these are all people, it seems to me, who are primarily concerned with replacing Williams. I do not feel any sense of urgency and a strong feeling for the situation in the country as a whole.

Well these people have all been critical of the Government at different times. I'm not sure exactly what you are getting at. . .

Let me give you another example. I was astonished the other day to see the former Commissioner of Police (Tony May) saying that he was "fed up" and therefore he was resigning because he couldn't take it anymore.

Now a commissioner of police is not a man in charge of some police station in Mayaro. He's a man responsible for law and order, particularly for order in the country as a whole. And when he declares to the public that he is "fed up", I say there's something radically wrong there.

A man can resign because he's tired or he's got enough but to resign as chief of police because you are "fed up", what kind of attitude is that? It's a lack of accountability.

Have you read reports of the speech made by the PNM political leader to the party's 21st annual convention?

From what I have read, it is clear he had nothing to say. Because the only important thing about the speech is that he was saying all the things the PNM had done, and that he was going to resign in two years, so they had better take care of themselves.

In other words, he does not analyse the situation in the country. What he says is, "look at all I've done for you and I'm going." A typical absence of political statement.

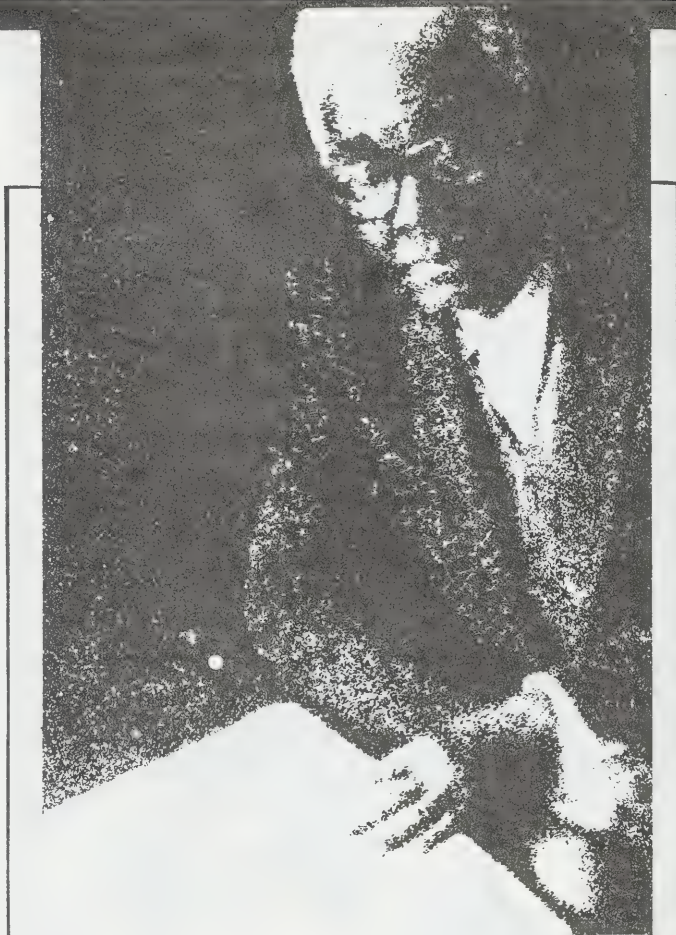
Are you associated with the so-called Communist Party of Trinidad and Tobago that Williams referred to in his address?

Not at all. I have never been a member of any Communist party. I used to be a Trotskyite but I left that in 1951 and since that time I have been a free and independent Marxist.

But what is significant is that Williams has given the impression that he is going in two years. And it is very sad that nobody in Trinidad believes him. It is very sad when the leader of the country makes a statement and everybody knows he is just saying that. That is a sense of corruption and decay. And that is a result of many years of his manoeuvring.

But assuming Williams does go, by attrition or otherwise, what do you think would become of the PNM?

I have discovered from talking to people that the PNM is as much in the dark as other people are. They



have no idea of what is happening or what to do. That is what has distinguished Williams. He has carefully mis-educated and de-politicised every aspect of society in Trinidad and Tobago.

Nobody has any politics here any longer. You live as best you can, you get the most that you can. You avoid all that you can and you go along. Williams is responsible for that.

Well given recent events in the Caribbean — in Grenada and Dominica, Guyana and Jamaica — do you see Trinidad and Tobago escaping the effect of those events or are they going to be reflected here?

I am quite certain that within the next 10 years, vast changes will take place in the Caribbean. Either the mass of the population will move with the intention of doing what it failed in 1970, or there will be a growth of dictatorial governments from top to bottom. The next 10 years will be decisive.

What about the impact of the most recent US response to these events in the Caribbean?

I believe it all has to do with the effect the Cuban Government and the Cuban Revolution is having on the Caribbean. The mass of the population in various Caribbean islands have shown that they are quite critical of the existing state of affairs.

And the American government is aware of the danger and it is seeking to send force into the Caribbean to act as an obstacle in the way of the developing antagonisms to the existing regimes. This is not against so much the Russian force in Cuba; 2,000 Russians in Cuba cannot affect the day-to-day existence of the American people.

They're aware that Cuba is also seeing what is



going on in the region. They're aware of the Cuban intervention in Africa. By putting a force here, they want to intimidate others.

But you do really believe that the US Government today will land troops, will intervene in that kind of way in any Caribbean territory?

Well there are people who say that. But I think that is quite false. I think what is certain is that they will intervene when the movement is not powerfully based.

But if you have the majority of the population with you, they're not going to send in any army to crush a revolt. No. Not today. That move is merely seeking to intimidate.

Let's return to the existing situation in the region, in Trinidad and Tobago in particular. Is it going to continue until there is some major disruption?

I say there are going to be changes. And I regret to say — I've been trying to prevent it — there are going to be violent changes. I'm not in favour of violence, because violence has a habit of going far beyond what you intend. And it is best to make sure those changes occur in an orderly way if you can. But violence is inherent in the Caribbean situation.

However, you can't really tell exactly how or when it would be and it would be unwise to attempt any forecast. Nobody predicted 1970. But there is something else I would like to point out that is an important part of the calculation.

People talk about East Indians. Whenever the mass of the population has moved, the East Indian workers always join them. They are not in for a lot of talk. But anytime there is serious action, they are coming out too. And the future of this country depends on the unity between the two main races.

I've also said the islands, as a whole, face either a movement forward or the emergence of dictatorial governments. But there will be no dictatorial government in Trinidad. They will first have to overcome the OWTU and they won't be able to do that.

So it wouldn't be correct to describe the present government as a dictatorial government?

No. They've got to pass laws and so on. Here, you pass laws saying "no strikes" and then the strikes come more than ever before. No a dictatorial government is a very serious government that says "don't do that" and that's the end of you. It's a government that says "James can't come here and if he does, we will lock him up."

But they can't do that. The existing government tends towards autocracy but not dictatorship. It would be a mistake to describe the Williams government as a dictatorship.

It is anti-democratic, its tendency is autocratic, but it's not a dictatorship because law and politics are still active in the country, however much they may be distorted.

I mean, the fact that strikes are banned has become some kind of an historical joke.

CREATION

For Liberation

Ten Years Of Bogle L'Ouverture

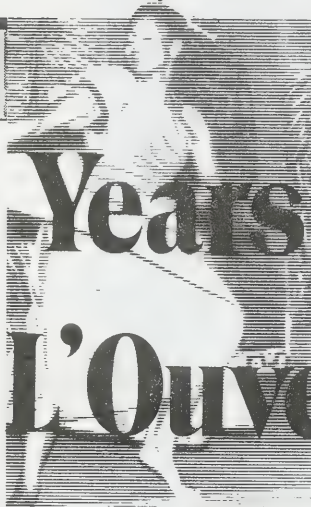


Photo credit: Elizabeth Anioruu

In October 1968, Walter Rodney, then a lecturer at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, was declared persona non grata by the government of Jamaica. At the time, Rodney was attending the Black Writers' Conference in Montreal, Canada, and the Jamaican government seized the opportunity to refuse him re-entry into the country.

Rodney was accused of spreading subversion among the Jamaican population. In fact, he was responding, in a series of lectures, to the increasing need of Jamaicans to know about their African ancestry. Once he switched from middle class audiences to working class ones, the government clamped down.

The population had had enough. It was another attempt by the government to deny information to its people. The

masses in Kingston proceeded to burn down property in the capital city. The banning of Walter Rodney had sparked off traditions of rebellion which lay dormant in the working classes and which has since spread throughout the Caribbean.

West Indians in Britain made an immediate response. A demonstration was held to protest the ban, and later a group of West Indians pulled together to publish the lectures which the Jamaican government had used the might of the state to censor.

Such were the origins of Bogle L'Ouverture and its first book publications, 'The Groundings with my Brothers' by Walter Rodney.

The activities in the publishing house remained true to their traditions. Paul

Bogle was born a slave in 1820 and forty years later, in 1865, he led the Morant Bay rebellion. He was one of the 436 fighters slaughtered by the government of Jamaica.

Toussaint L'Ouverture led the 18th century slave insurrection in San Dominique and defeated the English, French and Spanish in battle. He was tricked abroad a French ship and died from cold, starvation and cruelty in the Forti de Joix prison on April 7, 1803. In October 1805 his successor declared San Dominique the independent state of Haiti.

Bogle L'Ouverture now has eleven publications under its belt, and the activists have established themselves as major distributors of black literature in Britain.

'The Groundings with my Brothers' is in its fourth edition. Walter Rodney's 'How Europe Underdeveloped Africa' is a masterful and disciplined study of Europe's tortured relations with African people. Its popularity is an example of Bogle's precise judgement on the needs of its readers. The book has been translated into Portuguese, German and Spanish, and negotiations are in hand for a Japanese edition. A third English edition is now on the shelves.

Then followed a string of titles by Caribbean novelist, journalist and broadcaster, Andrew Salkey. His 'Joey Tyson' is a fictional reconstruction of the revolt which followed Rodney's ban in October 1968. 'Anancy Score' is a collection of 20 short, original, contemporary tales, all of which are the author's own creative interpretations of the traditional Afro-Caribbean spider, Anancy. An anthology of prose and poetry by Cuba's most outstanding writers is titled 'Writing in Cuba since the Revolution'.

And, of course, the publication of the best seller, 'Dread Beat an Blood', a collection of poems of reggae poet, Linton Kwesi Johnson, has uncovered the work of one of the most popular artists of our time. A third edition is due out next spring.

Bogle L'Ouverture has managed to focus on publications by and for children. Accabre Huntley's 'At School Today' is a fine poetic statement of the experience of young blacks in British schools. 'Rain Falling Sun Shining' by Odette Thomas and 'Getting to Know Ourselves' by

Walter Rodney

*The Groundings
with my Brothers*

*with an introduction
by Richard Small*

Phyllis and Bernard Coard are texts which paint-black images for children who are inundated with colonial descriptions of their past and present.

We are not simply describing a success story. The achievements of Bogle L'Ouverture represent an important development in the struggles of Caribbean peoples in their quest for the knowledge denied them by the colonial office nationalist governments for centuries.

The colonial experience is littered with examples of censorship on literature which the state deemed subversive. Two of the activists in Bogle L'Ouverture, Jessica and Eric Huntley, are Guyanese. Before immigrating to Britain, they were active within the anti-colonial movement as members of the radical Peoples Progressive Party. On coming to power, that party repealed the Subversive Literature Law passed by the colonial state.

The British government would have none of it. They sacked the government forthwith, suspended the constitution and dispatched troops to the then British Guiana. A State of Emergency was declared and several activists were detained, among them, Eric Huntley. The most reactionary passions of British politicians were unleashed at the prospect of knowledge being made freely available to Caribbean peoples.

Very little literature was produced from within Caribbean society. The local commercial middle classes, from whom the only local capital was available, never thought in those terms.

Under the leadership of the nationalist parties, we feared no better. To this day, there exists not one single publishing house of any significance in the entire

English speaking Caribbean. Our novelists, historians, poets and other writers have been mainly published abroad. And there is no shortage of talent. Naipaul, Lamming, Selvon, CLR James, Earl Lovelace, Derek Walcott and the list is endless. All are published in the metropolis.

Not that the issue has been publicly avoided. One example will suffice. In 1958, CLR James was invited by Eric Williams, then the leader of the popular nationalist movement, to edit the organ of the political party, the Peoples National Movement. In preparing for the task, James wrote a report to the political leader. One section of the report deals exclusively with the needs of the Caribbean peoples in respect to publishing:

"All of us have grown up in a mental atmosphere in which every single intellectual influence, direct and indirect, which shaped us, came from abroad, written by people abroad, printed abroad, distributed abroad. That was the unending and always overflowing source of specifically colonialist ideas and the slave mentality,

continued. Independence must mean the independent production of ideas to whatever degree adapted from elsewhere, their independent printing and publication in the West Indies. This is no ideal it is a necessity."

James identifies where the responsibility lay:

"This responsibility, objectively on a West Indian scale, falls on the PNM, not the PNM Publishing Co. The PNM Publishing Co. is the medium through which the Party will perform this section of the tasks."

No statement could be clearer, and James' work as Editor of the Party's journal, 'The Nation' was proof positive that the population was ready to respond. To this day, it has been the most profoundly polemical international journal ever published in the West Indies and read by the West Indian population. They bought every copy of all editions. James has since documented how the middle class leadership, at every turn, subverted the development of the tasks he outlined.

Twenty years later, we can trace the complete process of degeneration. Oil



fortified by the skillful, corrupt and shameless adaptation of these ideas to the needs of the local rulers. That has continued for generations. . . . "

James went on to suggest publications of a paperback series called 'Scarlet Ibis' (a local bird) under which title his 'Black Jacobins' and William's 'Capitalism and Slavery' would be reprinted.

Looking forward to independence, James develops his theme:

"Independence would be a force and would spring unsuspected dangers if this domination of foreign ideas con-

rich Trinidad and Tobago is still without a major publishing house, and in the last year, the PNM's printing equipment was sold, lock stock and barrel, to a squalid newspaper proprietor.

All the nationalist governments, without exception, when faced with a population thirsting for knowledge denied them for centuries, passed legislation banning subversive literature. They are colonial masters' reincarnate. All of them have found ways and means to encourage foreign capitalists into the countries. Tax free concessions, exceptions on import

duty, all the perks they could think of have been laid on for their new economic masters. No concession at all on printing equipment and newsprint. Forbes Burnham, the King Kong of Guyana, has monopolised newsprint for his party journal and denied it to others.

Here in Britain, we have shown, that once we are free of these rigorous restrictions, we are able to build publishing organisations bearing the stamp of good sensible organisation and confidence.

Britain is not without its obstacles. Publishing needs capital and bank loans are sometimes necessary. The climate is not that progressive, particular within banking circles, where, for instance, a publisher of black literature can easily secure loans. And the right wing racists have, on several occasions, physically attacked the properties of black publishers.

Today, in the year of their tenth anniversary, Bogle L'Ouverture stands as a

monument to the struggles of Caribbean peoples in the quest for the conditions in which free creative expression can develop. Perhaps, the best method of testing this historical fact is in the response of those whom Bogle L'Ouverture has sought to address in the last ten years.

A group of blacks formed themselves into the Friends of Bogle, with the aim of organising the tenth anniversary celebrations. Hundreds were mobilised in a series of lectures ranging from 'Rastafarianism' to 'Education' through to 'Violence in the Caribbean Novel'. The celebrations ended in grand style at the Commonwealth Institute, where a packed house was entertained to Caribbean song, dance and poetry.

It was a fitting climax to an important stage on the road to liberation along which Caribbean peoples have travelled for centuries.

Darcus Howe

of time, Shange conjures up a full scale drama with elements of comedy, pathos, tragedy, main actors of different sexes, supporting cast and the various geographical locations in which the action takes place.

I found the play highly entertaining because of Shange's amazing gift of the gab, and the skill of the actresses, a bevy of goodlooking women dressed in eye-catching costumes who went through their paces with a slick and seductive professionalism. Think of Millie Jackson, add a Phd in literature, multiply by seven and you'd get a fair idea of the tenor of this production.

Despite the technical skills displayed in the production, the whole enterprise seemed to me remarkably and relentlessly frivolous. You can't help thinking that if Shange's character concerned themselves more about the conditions that create the infuriating characteristics of the men who are targetted as the women's main oppressors, and less about the relatively trivial trials and tribulations of their domestic, social and romantic lives, these characteristics could be eradicated as a first step towards liberating themselves from an oppression of which the particular forms focused on by Shange are only a part.

The play's finale, which had each woman sanctimoniously intoning "I found god in myself and I loved her fiercely," had this black girl considering (given the play's obsession with the way men put down women emotionally and physically) a woman would do better to find a black belt karate champion within herself and train her assiduously; which only goes to show how catching frivolity is.

Not Quite Enough

**For Coloured Girls Who Have Considered
Suicide When The Rainbow is Enuf**
by Ntozake Shange
At The Royal Theatre
Reviewed by Akua Rugg



'For Coloured girls who have considered Suicide when the Rainbow is Enuf' is a theatrical event developed out of a series of poems written by an Afro American woman, Ntozake Shange. The poems become 'scenes' which add up to a 'play' whose central theme is the particular form of oppression experienced by Afro American women and their attempts to liberate themselves from that oppression.

The subjects the poems cover are the preoccupations of black women as identified by Ms Shange. The form of the play consists of seven women reciting the poems and fleshing out the words with movement, mime, song and dance. The seven characters reminisce about their childhoods and adolescence, agonise about finding a sense of identity as blacks and as women, and complain about how badly they are treated by men.

Although there is no plot for the audience to concentrate its attention on, Ms Shange manages to convey situations and personalities by the sheer force of her extraordinary command and manipulation of language. The most powerful poem/scene of the production tells the tale of a

Vietnam veteran whose pent up frustrations find release in the killing of his own children during the course of an argument with his woman. Using just the one actress, and within a very short space



Denise Marcia in a scene from the play Photo credit: Laurie Sparham

Land Of Dreams

Throne in an Autumn Room
by **Lennox Brown**
At the Keskidee Centre, N.1.
Reviewed by **Akua Rugg**

'Throne in an Autumn Room' is a most fitting production for staging at the Keskidee — London's leading venue for black drama. The subject of the play concerns the effect of migration on the lives of West Indians.

The action of the play is set in an apartment located in the 'banana belt', the black working class ghetto of a Canadian city. The apartment is occupied by the play's three main protagonists. Tyrell Shabang is an "unemployed, self-employed" travel agent. He is also a buffer between his wife Christine, once a teacher in Trinidad, presently a cook for rich whites, and Ray a university drop-out and childhood friend of Tyrell's. Ray and Christine are constantly at war, as Ray's ability to aid and abet Tyrell's grandiose schemes far outstrip his ability to produce the rent Christine insistently and consistently demands. The relationship between the three provides Brown with the opportunity of examining the circumstances of the lives of three blacks, differentiated by sex and educational qualifications, and allows him also to deal with the themes of the demoralization experienced by immigrants, their search for identity, their quest for self respect and need to satisfy basic material needs.

Brown is a distinguished and accomplished dramatist. Unlike many black playwrights whose work has been shown

at the Keskidee, he is able to express his ideas with a genuine dramatic flair. Tyrell and Ray's demoralization is conveyed not merely by dialogue, but by way of the plot Brown has chosen.

The plot turns on Ray's desperate efforts to keep a roof over his head. Christine may be Queen in the apartment due to her earning capacity, but whilst she is out at work, Ray plots an apartment revolution. Christine returns home one evening to find her living room transformed into the throne room of the play's title; Tyrell resplendent in a carnival



Lennox Brown, playwright

king's costume from happier days, and Ray hovering about nervously in a dashiki. With good reason, for he is responsible for the bizarre spectacle. What Christine witnesses is, in fact, a dress rehearsal for a fantastic fraud Ray hopes to perpetrate. Having discovered from a newspaper photograph that an African King is the spit image of Tyrell, Ray decides to win respect and gain money by exploiting the likeness.

Brown's theatrical inventiveness never fails him, and this is amply demonstrated in the scene in which Ray's skank is sussed when he and Tyrell 'go public' on a TV programme. All the themes within the play — the duplicity and subversive dominance of whites, the powerlessness of blacks and the idea of Africa as motherland are tied up in an ingenious and hilarious climax.

Tyrell behaves like a giant spanner in

the works of the electronic and intellectual precision of the TV programme. Abandoning Ray's carefully researched script, Tyrell draws on his street sense, and ad libs in a most unkingly fashion, thus winning from the supercilious white interviewers an awe he never commanded whilst posing as cousin several times removed (by time and space over the centuries) of an African king.

Rufus Collins' direction, as usual, matches the play's excellence. His handling of the TV sequence, for example, is imaginative and innovative, developing and enhancing the satirical mood of the scene. Henry Muttoo's design and decor, particularly in this scene and of the production in general, must also be highly commended.

The actors, playing parts they can really get their teeth into, give superb performances. Anton Phillips conveys the disarming charm of the thorough-going scamp that Ray is with utter conviction. Yvonne Giddens, with her mobile and expressive face, combines a talent as a fine comedienne with skill in the straight acting required in her role as the realist of the trio. Lloyd Anderson as Tyrell achieves the transformation from a "45 year old failure" to the self important "pretender" to the throne without letting his character degenerate into a caricature.

'Throne in an Autumn Room' is an impressive play by any standards. Ideas, dialogue and characterisation mesh in a seamless whole. It is a highly entertaining play, that at the same time raises issues that seriously concern blacks. The Keskidee Theatre Company has often seemed in the past to be in search of an author to develop the potential it has shown. In Lennox Brown it appears to have found one.



Above: scene from the play with Yvonne Giddens, Anton Phillips and Lloyd Anderson

THE KESKIDEE THEATRE WORKSHOP

Throne in an autumn room

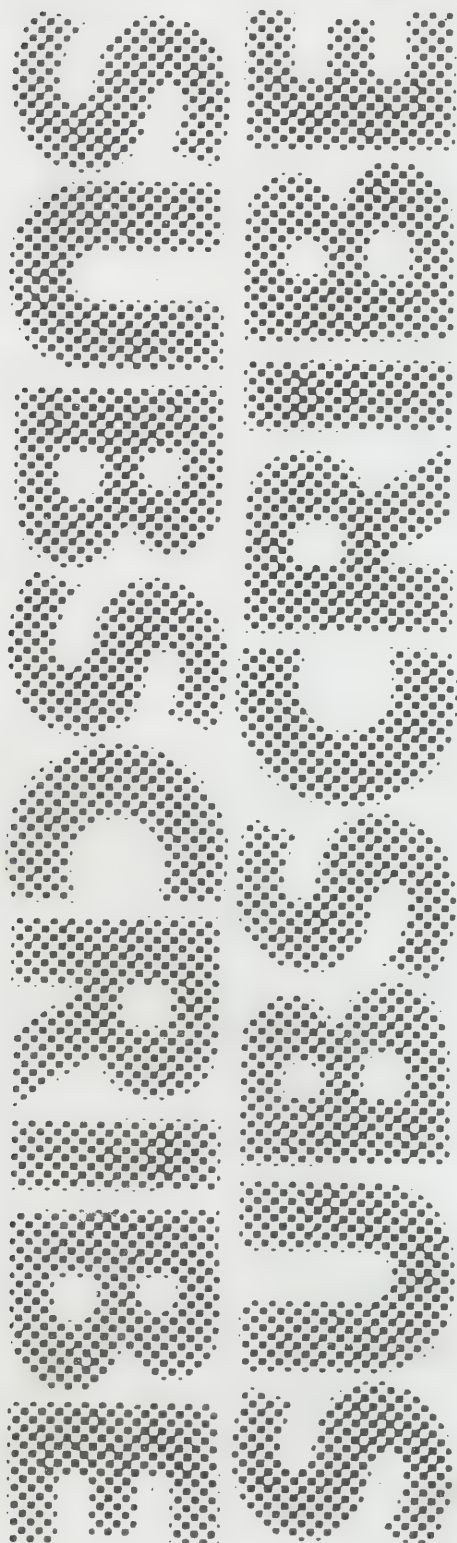
BY LENNOX BROWN

Directed by Rufus Collins

Designed by Henry Muttoo

October 11 - November 11

Lloyd Anderson Yvonne Giddens Chris Gilbert



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THE FEDERATION OF WORKER WRITERS & COMMUNITY PUBLISHERS

The literature panel of the Arts Council was asked to co-found the running of an office and a co-ordinator's wage for the above Federation, in conjunction with The Gulbenkian Foundation, on 14.5.78. On 19.3.79 the Arts Council rejected the application on the basis that *'they considered the whole corpus of work contained little, if any, solid literature merit.'* From November, '78 to Nov. '79 the Gulbenkian has funded the basic running costs of the Fed but is unable to consider our re-application until June, 1980.

The Federation links hundreds of working class writers, who have joined forces, across the country to read and publish new work. This lack of immediate finance means that the Fed is now broke and unable to continue developing, fostering and encouraging the tremendous growth in working class and socialist literature that has occurred over the last five years.

You can help the Federation, through this crisis, in two ways:

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